

HM greets President of Azerbaijan

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Ilham Heydar Aliyev of the Republic of Azerbaijan on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Aliyev. His Majesty also wished the people of Azerbaijan further progress and prosperity. – ONA



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PODIUM
RETURN FOR
AHMAD, OMAN
RACING



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OPEC+ DECISION
ON OUTPUT CUT
TO HELP STABILISE
MARKETS: OMAN



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WOMEN AT
THE FOREFRONT
OF OMAN'S
ART SCENE



MUSCAT

**SOLAR ECLIPSE
ON OCTOBER 25**

Oman Astronomical Society has said that a partial social eclipse will be visible in the Sultanate of Oman on October 25 (Tuesday). Speaking about the phenomenon, Al Julanda bin Masoud al Rawahi, Head of the Social Communication Committee at OAS, said that the partial solar eclipse will begin at 14.50 local time Oman, peaks at 15.57 and dissipates at 16.58. This means that the partial solar eclipse will last 2 hours and 7 minutes.

DETAILS ON P5

**CRUDE PRICE AT
\$89.60 A BARREL**

Oman oil price for December delivery on Monday reached \$89.60, comprising a decline by \$2.46 from the price of last Friday which stood at \$92.06. The average price of Oman oil for October delivery has stabilised at \$97 per barrel, thus \$6.21 per barrel lower than September delivery. World oil prices were trying to bounce, after sinking more than 6 per cent last week as fears of a demand slowdown outweighed Opec's plans to cut output. Brent firmed 90 cents to \$92.55 a barrel, while US crude rose 84 cents to \$86.45 per barrel.



INSIDE



IRAQ'S PRESIDENT FOR
SPEEDY GOVERNMENT

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PAKISTAN FLOODS SHATTER
COTTON WORKERS' DREAMS

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HM, Iran President
review bilateral ties



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik made a phone call on Monday with President Ebrahim Raisi of the Islamic Republic of Iran. During the telephonic conversation, aspects of the bilateral cooperation and means of promoting them were reviewed in various spheres. Views on the latest regional and international developments were also exchanged. — ONA

Russia hits Kyiv apartment block
in drone attacks on Ukraine cities



MOSCOW: At least seven people were killed and many more were injured after Russia again targeted Ukraine and other cities in attacks that struck in the middle of Monday morning's rush-hour traffic, just a week after a similar wave of strikes.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky condemned the new Russian attacks against the civilian population. "The enemy can attack our cities, but he will not break us," he said on Telegram.

There were five blasts in Kiev that Mayor Vitali Klitschko said were due to combat drones. One explosion tore a large hole in a multi-storey residential building, killing four people including a pregnant woman.

Officials said more than a dozen people had been rescued but efforts were ongoing as some remained trapped.

Ukrainian interior minister Denys Monastyrsky said two paramedics were also injured in Kiev. Russia deployed some 40 drones, five of which struck Kiev, he said, according to Ukrinform news agency.

Zelensky and Klitschko called on people to continue standing together during this difficult time.

Moscow targeted Ukrainian energy and defence infrastructure with missiles launched from the air and sea, according to the Russian defence ministry in Moscow.

"All targeted objects were hit," spokesperson Igor Konashenkov said.

SEE ALSO P7

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OUTSTANDING
WOMEN FETED AS
OMANI WOMEN'S
DAY MARKED

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development held a celebration to mark the Omani Women's Day under the auspices of Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, Minister of Social Development, at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, on Monday.

Thirty outstanding women were honoured during the event. The honourees included researchers, business women, rural women, entrepreneurs, owners of small and medium enterprises and leading women in the agricultural field.

The winners of Mubadara competition, launched by the Ministry of Social Development in collaboration with Omantel, were announced during the event. The initiative aimed to train and build digital capacities of 60 members of the Omani Women Association from across the country. The participants received training on e-marketing tools of Google and Meta technologies to help them out with their home projects.

The event also witnessed the launch of Rifi (Arabic for rural) platform which is dedicated to the promotion and marketing of products produced by rural



Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar launching 'Rifi' platform.
Photo by Khalfan al Ruzaiki

women, female entrepreneurs and leading women in the sectors of agriculture, fisheries, craft industries and related sectors. The Rifi platform is an integral part of the Rifi programme which was launched by the Honourable Lady, Spouse of His Majesty the Sultan, on November 7, 2021.

Rifi platform, the first-of-its-kind in the Middle East, displays various products in a seamless manner targeting local and international consumers as well as retail and wholesale traders.

The platform focuses on the marketing and promoting products produced by rural women, crafts women and female entrepreneurs.

SEE ALSO P3

'Fragrant Journeys' expo focuses on land of frankincense



MUSCAT: The National Museum inaugurated the exhibition "Fragrant Journeys" at Bayt Greiza, in cooperation with France's Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon and the French Embassy in Oman.

The inauguration ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Fatma bint Mohammed al Ajmi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Administrative, Financial and Planning Affairs.

Jamal Hassan al Moosawi, Secretary General of the National Museum, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the "Fragrant Journeys" is the first exhibition to be conducted in Bayt Greiza and the first joint cultural exhibition between Oman and France after many years.

He added: "Hosting the exhibition comes within the framework of cultural diplomacy pursued by the museum with the aim of strengthening the bonds of friendship and introducing the visitor to the fragrance culture that originated from Oman's land of frankincense. The exhibition showcases selected artefacts with historical, aesthetic and moral

connotation to ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilisations, as well as Medieval Italy, Medieval France, passing through time to the Enlightenments era, modern arts and contemporary artistic expressions in France.

Sylvie Raymond, Director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon, said in a statement that the Museum of Fine Arts will display a selection of pieces from valuable collections in the National Museum. Those selected pieces tell a fragrant history in the path of perfumery.

TURN TO P5



Oman Vision 2040 seeks to empower women economically, professionally

FORUM ON ECONOMIC, KNOWLEDGE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN KICKS OFF

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

Oman Vision 2040 promises enhanced economic and skill empowerment for women by enhancing opportunities, exchange of ideas between Omani and other Gulf countries and boosting expertise from different experiences in light of a unified philosophy and goal to achieve overall sustainability.

A two-day forum on “Omani women and indicators of economic and knowledge empowerment within Oman Vision 2040” kicked off on Monday under the auspices of HH Sayyida Dr Mona bint Fahd bin Mahmood al Said. Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, and several high level officials, members of the State Council, and a large group of invitees were present during the inaugural session of the forum.

Organised by the Ministry of Social Development in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos University, the forum aims to shed light on the latest trends and aspirations towards raising the indicators of Omani women.

In her statement, Dr Laila al Najjar, said: “Since the launch of the blessed renaissance by the late Sultan Qaboos, the importance of the real partnership of Omani women in building a strong society alongside men has been emphasised. Women have been sharing the full opportunity to participate in various fields of



comprehensive development. Believing in this role, Omani women have received noble sublime attention and care in light of the march of the renewed renaissance led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, who emphasised that Omani women enjoy their rights guaranteed by law, and work with men in various fields; serving their country as an essential partner in development.”

She added that Omani women represented 49.6 per cent of the total population of the Sultanate of Oman until the end of December 2021, which means half the number. “With this percentage, the women have made

a difference in education, health and community development. Women continue to innovate in various areas of life to overcome its difficulties and hardships, to advance this dear country”.

She also said, “The number of Omani women working in the private sector for the past year 2021 is 108,481 out of the total Omanis working in this sector. The numbers, however, will continue to rise, telling Omani women’s success stories and highlighting the outcome of their work in the economic, scientific and innovation fields, while stressing their determination to continue researching and investigating



Since the launch of the blessed renaissance by the late Sultan Qaboos, the importance of the real partnership of Omani women in building a strong society alongside men has been emphasised

HE DR LAILA BINT AHMED AL NAJAR
Minister of Social Development

everything that contributes to the advancement and progress of this dear country.”

Sayyid Dr Adham bin Turki al Said of Sultan Qaboos University presented ‘Readings on women’s economic empowerment’, which included the concept of “development” as the process of improving the quality of living and human capabilities by raising the standard of living of individuals, self-respect and freedom.

He also touched upon aspects related to economic empowerment such as the state basic system and the goals of sustainable development 2030, as well as the challenges facing women in the

labour sector such as experience, lack of training and specialisation. Dr Adham also talked about how to empower women economically in terms of comprehensiveness in participation, flexibility in choice, social protection, and competition in supply.

On the first day, the forum discussed national mechanisms towards empowering Omani women within the vision of “Oman 2040 and the developmental trends of Omani women within the indicators of sustainable development 2030.

On Tuesday, eight papers will be presented by academics and social experts.

WOMEN’S ACTIVE ROLE IN MEDIA COMMENDED



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information held a celebration to mark the Omani Women’s Day in the presence of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, on Monday. The minister of information commended the Omani women’s role and active presence in both the conventional and modern media, pointing to their significant contribution in development being partners along with men in the achievements that transpired in the Sultanate of Oman over the past year.



Host of activities mark Omani Women’s Day

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed bin Nasser al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, the Ministry of Education celebrated the Omani Women’s Day, which comes on the 17th of October every year. The Sultanate of Oman celebrates Women’s Day this year under the slogan “women are partners in development” in the belief in their role in the era of renewed renaissance.

The celebration ceremony

included a poem recited by Zakiya al Hashmi, Arabic Language Teacher at the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, who was honoured among the distinguished teachers on E-learning platforms.

Dr Madeeha honoured Sumaya al Siyabi, who won the Stars of Science as the first Arab Women for her scientific innovation in the environment. Dr Madeeha also honoured Khadeeja al Mafreji, who won the first place

in the Rashid bin Humaid Award for Culture and Science, for her literary creativity.

The Muscat Hall at the Ministry of Education also hosted a diverse exhibition for private institutions and home-based projects.

In addition, Manal al Khaifi, a trainer, gave a lecture entitled “dealing with stress through breathing” and Salwa al Ghafri, a make-up artist, gave a “make-up lesson” in the Khasab Hall of the ministry’s general diwan.





OMANI WOMEN'S Day

OMANI WOMEN'S DAY EMBODIES THE ROYAL ATTENTION ACCORDED TO OMANI WOMEN IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR GREAT ROLES IN DEVELOPMENT

Royal support to Omani women hailed



Shaikha bint Ali al Nuaimiyah



Mariam bint Issa al Zadjaliyah



Sariyah bint Khalfan al Hadiyah



Lujaina bint Mohsin al Zaabiyah



Dr Badriyah bint Ibrahim al Shuhiyah

MUSCAT: The female members of the State Council affirmed that the designation of October 17 as the Omani Women's Day, constituted a significant milestone in the history of Omani women. This day embodies the attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to women and his appreciation to their great national roles.

The Royal attention accorded to women culminated in their empowerment in various fields as the Omani women made their presence felt in various work fields and contributed to the huge development that took place in the Sultanate of Oman. Besides,

the Omani women have gained excellent standing on the regional, Arab and international levels as regards empowerment in terms of ability to practice political, economic and social activities.

This year, the Omani Women's Day comes as Omani women have further confirmation to women's role and the Royal credit they have obtained. The role of the Omani women in the State Council is especially impressive as they have been active representatives of the people in the legislative body. There are 15 female members in the State Council in its current seventh term which indicates a significant role of women in the

decision-making process.

DR BADRIYAH BINT IBRAHIM AL SHUHIYAH, Deputy Chairman of the State Council, said: "In my view, the key for any woman to join new fields, fundamentally, has something to do with the confidence in her abilities and belief in herself and her intellectual giftedness. It is suitable to talk about their role as a mother and her ability of excellent upbringing of her children."

MARIAM BINT ISSA AL ZADJALIYAH, member of the Technology and Innovation Committee of the State Council,

said that the Omani women have confirmed their ability of giving and perseverance under all circumstances. She added that the Omani Women's Day embodies the Royal attention accorded to Omani women in recognition of their great roles in development. This requires us to intensify our efforts to devise ambitious and promising plans for supporting and empowering women in various fields.

LUJAINA BINT MOHSIN AL ZAABIYAH, member of the State Council, said that every woman should do their best to preserve the women's

achievements by doubling their efforts in their respective fields. In addition, women should strive to make a greater presence at Majlis Ash'shura as well as ratchet up their roles in serving community and women issues.

SHAIKHA BINT ALI AL NUAIMIYAH, member of Technology and Innovation Committee of the State Council, said: "Presently, Omani women assume greater roles in various scientific and practical fields. They have significant contributions in serving social issues and leading roles in all

fields, not the least of which is the membership of the State Council."

SARIYAH BINT KHALFAN AL HADIYAH, member of the Economic Committee of the State Council, said: "The Omani women were able to assume leading roles in various fields in the regional, Arab and international levels. What was achieved by the women is a source of pride for all Omani women. We have to aspire for the future with confidence and we have to ensure a more sustained women's participation in serving the nation."



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'Click' of the moment for young woman photographer

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

It was a 'click' of the moment for Shamsa al Harthy when her father gave her a camera during a holiday trip to explore her hobby in photography. It happened during her school days. She pursued her hobby while in the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), and today she is a professional photographer.

By honing her skills on the camera given by her father and supported by uncle, she became head of the photography club while pursuing secondary education.

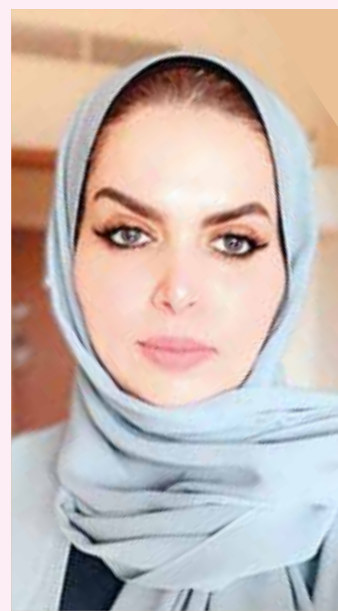
"We had gone on a family trip to Jordan and my father and uncle encouraged me to explore photography. We were in Petra when my father gave me my first camera," Shamsa remembered.

Today she is a press photographer, a profession she took after majoring in photography at University of Technology and Applied Science.

The number of photographs she has clicked in the last 12 years would be in six digits, she admits.

"I had joined Business Studies but my passion called me and soon I moved to photography," she said.

Since graduation, she has been working in the



Being press photographer has made me an independent woman. At times we can be on our feet for four hours but it is all worth it

SHAMSA AL HARTHY

news media as a press photographer.

Her profession and interest in photography took her to Europe, Singapore, India, China, Korea and Turkey.

Shamsa is intrigued by faces and tells, "Each face can say a million things." While press photography is all about facts, her personal passion is for abstract photography.

"Cultures of the land excite me," she reflected.

"In the Sultanate of Oman, I like to visit villages. Two of my favourite places are Al Manzafa in Ibra, and Harat Al Aqr in Nizwa. My profession has given me immense opportunities to explore the Sultanate of Oman- the land and people, from camel and horse races to news and business," she explained.

Shamsa has won many

national and regional prizes and had the opportunities to attend training to further her knowledge.

"It is a very exciting profession and each day I look forward to learning something more. I do self-study as well to keep up with the latest techniques in the field," pointed out Shamsa.

She is of the opinion that digital media has made photography exciting but old techniques were equally good. "When I am given an assignment, I am eager to execute because each one is a new experience. Photography is all about memories that last forever and this gives me more push," said Shamsa adding, "being press photographer has made me an independent woman. At times we can be on our feet for four hours but it is all worth it."



Malabar Gold & Diamonds opens 3 showrooms in Oman; in Oman Avenues Mall, Nizwa and Ibri

Bollywood Actor Anil Kapoor inaugurates the renovated and restyled showroom in Oman Avenues Mall

- ◆ Inauguration of the renovated showroom at Oman Avenues Mall was done by Brand Ambassador & Bollywood Actor Anil Kapoor.
- ◆ Malabar Gold & Diamonds also opens 2 new showrooms in Nizwa and Ibri.
- ◆ Customers to get assured gold coins on gold & diamond jewellery purchase as part of festive offers.
- ◆ The brand has also unveiled an exclusive line of festive jewellery collection across its sub-brands.

With an impressive network of over 285 outlets spread across 10 countries, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally, opened 3 showrooms in Oman Avenues Mall, Nizwa and Ibri. The renovated and restyled showroom in Oman Avenues mall was inaugurated by Brand Ambassador & Bollywood actor Anil Kapoor in the presence of Mr. Shamlal Ahamed, MD - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Mr. Najeeb K, Regional Head - Malabar Gold & Diamonds; other Malabar Gold & Diamonds management team members, customers, and well-wishers. The imminent arrival of Anil Kapoor itself was a huge crowd puller for the local population and the inaugural event at Oman Avenues Mall saw a huge number of spectators gathered to witness the performance of the renowned actor, who entertained and mesmerized the crowd with his enthralling energy.

The showrooms in Lulu Hypermarket at Nizwa and Ibri were inaugurated on the 10th of October by the Wally of Nizwa, Saeadat Alshaykh Rashid Bin Saeid Bin Sayf Alkalbani and the Wally of Ibri, Saeadat Alshaykh Mushin Bin Hamd Bin Muhsin Almaskarii respectively, in the presence of Mr. Najeeb K, Regional Head - Malabar Gold & Diamonds, other management team members, customers and well-wishers.

All the showrooms showcase a wide variety of jewellery collections across Malabar Gold & Diamonds' various sub brands such as Mine, Era, Viraz, Divine, Ethnix, Precia & Starlet. Comprising of traditional jewellery, modern jewellery, daily wear jewellery, kids jewellery and much more, the jewellery designs in Gold, Diamond and Precious gems have been curated from over 20 countries.

"The renovated showroom in Oman Avenues Mall and the new showrooms at Nizwa and Ibri aim to provide our customers with an unforgettable jewellery shopping experience. The immense collection of designs that we have on display coupled with the special line up of festive jewellery collections that we have arranged across our sub-brands ensure that Malabar Gold & Diamonds is the go-to place for jewellery lovers across the region. With 18 showrooms in the Sultanate, we are one of the largest jewellery retailers in the country", said Mr. Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

With the festive offers that Malabar Gold & Diamonds have offered, customers can get assured gold coins on gold & diamond jewellery purchase from all outlets, valid until the 23rd of October.

Embracing the spirit of the season, the Festive jewellery collection that the brand has unveiled puts forward an exquisite collection of gold & diamond jewellery designed to enthrall jewellery lovers. The special designs have been made available across a wide range of sub-brands such as Mine, Era, Precia, Viraz, Ethnix and Divine, comprising of 22k gold, diamonds and precious gem jewellery. Elegant designs crafted in contemporary fashion have also been introduced in the 18K gold category.

With the tastes and preferences of the local Omani population in mind, the brand has launched 'Brides of Oman' campaign, showcasing both traditional bridal jewellery in 21K gold as well as contemporary designs in diamond jewelry.



NIZWA LULU HYPERMARKET - OMAN



OMAN AVENUES MALL - OMAN



IBRI LULU HYPERMARKET - OMAN





In brief

MUSCAT



OMAN TO WITNESS PARTIAL SOLAR ECLIPSE ON OCT 25

Oman Astronomical Society (OAS) has said that a partial solar eclipse will prevail over Omani skies on Tuesday, October 25. Speaking about the phenomenon, Al Julanda bin Masoud al Rawahi, Head of the Social Communication Committee at OAS, said that the partial solar eclipse will begin at 14.50—local time Oman, peak at 15.57 and dissipate at 16.58. This means that the partial solar eclipse will last 2 hours and 7 minutes.

Acting in cooperation with the astronomical affairs department at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the OAS will organise events related to public observation of the partial solar eclipse.



FORUM DISCUSSES BEST SERVICE QUALITY CRITERIA

The Ministry of Labour here today organised the 8th Annual Customer Experience Forum in cooperation with Al Assayel for Conferences company. The forum discussed customer service as a form of corporate culture aimed to achieve top quality in rendering services to members of the public.

The forum looks into the great challenges posed to government and private sector establishments in their quest to provide the best services to their customers. Salient features of the forum include an overview of customer experience under the theme of “Lessons from pioneers of customer service industry”.

MADHA



67% WORK AT NEW MADHA HOSPITAL COMPLETED

Construction work at the new hospital of Madha in the Governorate of Musandam are pressing ahead, with 67% of the tasks completed at a cost of more than RO 6 million. The Ministry of Health supervises the project.

Eng Jamal bin Salim al Shanfari, Director General of Projects and Engineering Affairs at the ministry, said that the hospital occupies an area of 10,000 sqm and consists of 40 beds, hospitalisation wards, labs and other facilities. He added that the project is progressing as planned.

Dr Ahmed bin Abdullah al Madhani, Head of Madha Health Centre, said the new hospital has 14 standard health clinics.

‘Welcome Oman’ showcases tourism products, services

MUSCAT: A promotion event showcasing tourism products and services offered by the Sultanate of Oman to visitors was organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism on Monday.

The five-day event, held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, was opened under the auspices of Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Heritage Under-Secretary.

The event, which sees the participation of tourism operators and developers, aims to consolidate ties among partners in the Omani tourism sector and their GCC counterparts to help open new vistas of tourism in Oman.

Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Tourism Under-Secretary underscored the significance of



the tourism promotion event which, he said, projects the GCC market as the largest destination that “exports tourists to Oman”. As a result, a total of 1,085,828

tourists visited Oman from January to the end of September 2022, he added.

The GCC market, he observed, spurs growth in the tourism

sector in Oman, distinguished in the region for its unique natural landscape, as well as cultural and historical diversity.

The event includes meetings,

bilateral discussions and dialogues on tourism facilities, in addition to a field trip to some tourism attractions in Oman.

— ONA

Meetings to sort out issues of SMEs

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT. 17

More than 320 business leaders took part in a meeting to boost young entrepreneurs. The meeting was organised by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Riyada) with participation from entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium enterprises in the Muscat Governorate.

The meeting was part of the series in various wilayats that was launched in Dhofar Governorate in August followed by the Governorate of North Al Batinah in September.

The meeting reviewed the strategic directions of the SMEDA, including the goals it seeks to achieve, implementations, and existing services and initiatives to support and empower small and medium enterprises, such as financing programmes, business incubators, and the regulation for conducting home productive businesses.

The meeting discussed the challenges being faced by the owners of small and medium enterprises in the areas of financing, usufruct land, training, development and empowerment, marketing and

The meeting discussed the challenges being faced by the owners of small and medium enterprises in the areas of financing, usufruct land, training, development and empowerment, marketing and promotion

promotion, systems of legislation and laws, and providing business opportunities such as tenders, contracts and procurement, in order to come up with solutions and initiatives.

The attendees were divided into groups according to the sectors and topics of interest of the entrepreneurs. Interactive questions were asked related to surveying the audience's opinions about the Authority's services and the most media and communication tools used to follow up on the authority's news. In addition to initiatives and the sectors that the attendees see the importance of focusing on during the coming period.

Abdulaziz al Raisi, Vice-President of the Small

and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, said: “The direct meetings of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority continue with entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium enterprises, an approach that the Authority has taken to remain close to entrepreneurs and closely identify the challenges they face and then develop solutions and initiatives applicable. Although, we look forward to coming out of this meeting with effective initiatives to overcome all the challenges facing owners of small and medium enterprises.”

The statistics of mid-September 2022, showed that the number of small and medium enterprises in the Governorate of Muscat is 27,692, of which 14,078 have an entrepreneurship card. Retails in the field of repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles ranked third.

The meeting was focused on the aims of listening to the challenges facing owners of small and medium-sized enterprises, finding appropriate solutions to them, and converging views to develop possible plans and programmes for entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium-sized enterprises.

‘Fragrant Journeys’ focuses on land of frankincense



FROM PAGE 1

Luciano Rispoli, Acting Ambassador of the French Republic to the Sultanate of Oman, said that the depth of relations between Oman and France dates back to the 17th century, when French merchant ships anchored in the ports of Tyre and Muscat at the crossroads of the maritime trade routes leading to the Indian Ocean.

Rispoli added that the joint exhibition “Fragrant Journeys” comes as a prelude to a series of long-term cooperation between the two sides. He pointed out that this cooperation will extend in two phases. During the first

phase, 23 selected pieces of art will be loaned from the Lyon Museum of Fine Arts to be displayed in Bayt Greiza, during the period from October 17, 2022 to May 7, 2023.

The exhibition presents 23 artefacts from the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon, and highlights the frankincense and incense routes during the most prominent eras dating back to the Pharaonic era all the way to the avant-garde art. Those include a masterpiece of glazed pottery by the international artist Pablo Picasso, which is the first time a work by this international artist is displayed in Oman.

— ONA

Food Clinics to address challenges in projects

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 17

A programme titled “Food security clinics to address challenges facing the food security sector” began at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Monday.

The food security clinics are aimed at attracting investments and supporting and following up the implementation of investment initiatives and projects.

The programme was organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in cooperation with Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit and the National Programme for Investment and Exports Development.

The opening ceremony was

held under the auspices of Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shu'aili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning.

Ahmed Saleh al Harthy, Director of the Office of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, said that in September 2021, the ministry organised a food security lab that came up with projects and investment opportunities hoped to contribute to enhancing the system of food security in the Sultanate of Oman.

Held in cooperation with Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, the lab shortlisted 102 investment projects to be implemented through private



sector investments in the forthcoming period, to the tune of RO 1.3 billion.

Once completed, investments in these projects are expected to add value to the domestic product and raise the rate of self-sufficiency in food security.

The food security clinics cap up efforts exerted by the ministry to highlight major challenges facing food security projects in Oman.

They are designed to accelerate the rate of accomplishment and develop a mechanism approved by all parties to tone down the challenges facing future projects.

Mohammed Saud al Raisi, Supervisor of the food security sector at the National Programme for Investment and Exports Development, explored the stages of growth of food security thinking.

He spoke about the main outcomes of the food security labs held in September 2021. He said that considerable progress has been made in food security projects and sustainable cities in the governorates.

Yousuf Mohammed al Riyami, Director General of National Statistics at the National Centre for Statistics and Information, reviewed the indicators of the food security sector in Oman.

He said that total annual consumption of food stood at RO 2.7 billion, with an inflation rate of 5 per cent. The value of foodstuff imports in 2021 stood at RO 1.9 billion, with cereals topping the list, while food exports valued at RO 600 million, topped by fisheries products.



Iraq’s new president calls for speedy govt formation

BAGHDAD: Iraq’s newly-elected President Abdul Latif Rashid pledged on Monday on taking office to throw his weight behind efforts to rapidly form a strong new government.

“The Iraqi people expect a new government to be formed rapidly, and that it be efficient and united,” Rashid said on his inauguration at the presidential palace in Baghdad.

Rashid, 78, elected last Thursday to the largely ceremonial post reserved for Iraq’s Kurdish minority, swiftly named Mohammed Shia al Sudani as prime minister-designate.

Sudani’s task now is to form a new government that would end a year of political gridlock in the war-scarred nation since general elections were held in October 2021.

But the movement of firebrand Moqtada Sadr, Sudani’s rival in Iraq’s majority camp, had on Saturday announced its refusal to join a Sudani-led government, igniting fears of renewed delays that are common in Iraq’s multi-confessional politics.

Under the Iraqi constitution, the prime minister-designate has 30 days to form a government, a deadline that has often been



Abdul Latif Rashid attends a handover ceremony at Al Salam Palace in Baghdad. – Reuters



Iraq’s newly-elected President Abdul Latif Rashid during his inauguration and handover ceremony at Al Salam Palace in Baghdad. – AFP

missed.

“I will do everything I can to bring political forces closer and sponsor a dialogue,” Rashid said, also vowing to work toward “solid and balanced relations with neighbouring countries and the international community.”

The stakes are high for the next

Sudani’s task is to form a new government that would end a year of political gridlock in the war-scarred nation

cabinet, with a colossal \$87 billion in revenues from oil exports locked up in the central bank’s coffers.

The money can help rebuild infrastructure but it can only be spent after lawmakers approve a state budget presented by the new government.

Meanwhile, earlier, Iraqi outgoing Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi had appointed Hayam Nemat as acting finance minister after accepting Ihsan Abdul Jabbar’s resignation, the state news agency said.

It added Nemat will fill the position until a new government

is formed. Iraq’s parliament had last week elected Kurdish politician Abdul Latif Rashid as president, who immediately named Mohammed Shia al Sudani prime minister-designate, ending a year of deadlock after a national election in October last year. — Reuters

Australians take stock of flood damage

SYDNEY: Thousands of Australians on Monday returned to homes and businesses to assess flood damage even as evacuation warnings remained in inland regions of the southeast and authorities warned of more rain ahead which could trigger renewed flooding.

Major flood warnings are in place across many regions despite little rainfall over the weekend with many swollen rivers only expected to reach peak flood levels this week.

“We are living in very dangerous times in the days and weeks ahead,” Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said during a media conference from Forbes, one of the worst-affected towns in New South Wales state.

“There is further rain expected later this week, so it remains a very dangerous situation.”

The weather bureau forecast another wild weather system that could bring rains up to 50 mm across some flood-hit regions.

Large parts of Victoria state, southern New South Wales and the northern regions of the island state of Tasmania were slammed by an intense weather system last



A pedestrian walks along a flooded street as heavy rains affect Sydney. – Reuters

week with some taking more than a month’s worth of rain.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers warned the latest flooding has inundated “some of the best growing and producing (regions) in Australia” that will spike food prices, adding more pain to families battling surging inflation.

In Melbourne’s west, residents of the flooded suburb of Maribyrnong piled damaged furniture and soaked floor carpets outside homes, footage on social media showed.

Some Maribyrnong residents blamed a floodwall erected around the nearby Flemington Racecourse, home to next month’s annual Melbourne Cup horse race, for worsening the

flooding, local media reported.

Motel owner Meagan Keating in Rochester, one of the worst-hit towns about 200 km northwest of Melbourne, is getting ready to begin her clean-up.

“I’m just looking forward to turning my no vacancy off and being able to welcome people back,” she told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. — Reuters

South Korea kicks off military drills

SEOUL: South Korea’s troops kicked off their annual Hoguk defence drills on Monday, designed to boost their ability to respond to North Korea’s nuclear and missile threats amid simmering tension over both sides’ military activities.

The drills, due to end on Saturday, are the latest in a series of military exercises by South Korea in recent weeks, including joint activities with the United States and Japan.

The latest field training came as North Korea has been carrying out weapons tests at an unprecedented pace this year, firing a short-range ballistic missile and hundreds of artillery rounds near the heavily armed inter-Korean

border on Friday.

Pyongyang has angrily reacted to the South Korean and joint military activities, calling them provocations and threatening countermeasures. Seoul says its exercises are regular and defence-oriented.

Joined by some US forces, the South Korean troops will focus on maintaining readiness and improving the troops’ ability to execute joint operations during the Hoguk drills.

“The forces will conduct real-world day and night manoeuvres simulated to counter North Korea’s nuclear, missile and other various threats,” it said in a statement. — AFP



TOKYO

Japan PM orders probe into Unification Church

Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida ordered a government probe into the Unification Church on Monday, after the assassination of former premier Shinzo Abe renewed scrutiny of the sect.

The church has been in the spotlight because the man accused of killing Abe was reportedly motivated by resentment against the group, which has been accused of pressuring adherents to make hefty donations and blamed for



child neglect among members.

Officially known as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, the organisation was founded in Korea by Sun Myung Moon and its members. — AFP

BELLARI

Congress veteran expected to win leadership race

Members of India’s opposition Congress party voted on Monday to elect its first head in nearly 25 years from outside the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty of leaders, with a veteran loyal to the family expected to win.

Results are due on Wednesday in the battered party’s bid to revamp itself after losing the last two general elections to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party.

Party veteran Mallikarjun Kharge, 80, has the support



of many members, and his 66-year-old rival and former UN diplomat, Shashi Tharoor, has already complained about big leaders openly supporting

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka slashes fuel prices by 40 rupees

Crisis-hit Sri Lanka slashed fuel prices on Monday, the second cut in as many weeks, after the World Bank warned that the economy will shrink an unprecedented 9.2 per cent this year.

The energy ministry said the price of petrol will be reduced by 40 rupees to 370 rupees a litre from Monday night after a similar 10 per cent reduction earlier this month.

But the price of regular petrol is still twice the amount before the start of the crisis last year



while diesel is three and a half times more than what it was in December 2021. Earlier this year motorists spent weeks to get fuel, contributing to weeks of protests. — AFP



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In brief

■ ISLAMABAD



EX-PM IMRAN KHAN WINS BIG IN PAKISTAN BY-ELECTION

Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan won six of eight national assembly seats he stood for in a weekend by-election, unofficial results showed on Monday, a vote he has called a referendum on his popularity.

The by-election is the latest twist in months of political wrangling that began before Khan's April ouster via a no-confidence vote, and comes as the nation grapples with the aftermath of devastating monsoon floods that left a third of the country under water.

The polls were called "in constituencies where the government thought PTI was weakest", Khan, a former cricket captain, said. — AFP

■ PARIS



FRANCE'S TOP COURT FINES STATE OVER AIR POLLUTION

France's highest administrative court ordered the state to pay two new fines of \$9.75 million each for failing to improve air quality in the country's major cities. The sanction comes after a first € 10 million fine back in 2021, and five years after the Conseil d'Etat, which acts as a legal adviser to the executive and as the supreme court for administrative justice, ordered the government to reduce levels of nitrogen dioxide.

"The measures undertaken by the state don't guarantee that air quality improves enough to respect pollution thresholds as quickly as possible," the Conseil d'Etat said in a statement.

— Reuters

■ KHARTOUM



DEATH TOLL IN SUDAN'S ETHNIC CLASHES RISE TO 13

The death toll from ethnic clashes sparked by "land issues" in the latest unrest in Sudan's south has reached 13, the United Nations said, warning the situation remained "tense".

Fighting broke out on Thursday between members of the Hausa people and rival groups, most notably the Al Hamaj, in the Wad al Mahi village east of the city of Roseires in the southern Blue Nile state.

Clashes were sparked by "a dispute over land issues", the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said. The violence has left "at least 13 people dead and more than 24 injured," it said. — AFP



Kyiv mayor Vitali Klitschko speaks to press after a drone attack in Kyiv. — AFP



Rescuers extract a body from a residential building destroyed by a Russian drone strike amid Russia's attack on Ukraine in Kyiv. — Reuters

Russia strikes kill eight in Ukraine

KYIV: Russian attacks on Ukraine's capital and eastern region of Sumy killed at least eight people on Monday, Ukrainian officials said after dozens of drones were launched at Kyiv.

The emergency services said the overall toll in the capital rose to four in the wake of Russian attacks that badly damaged a residential building.

"Four people died and three were taken to hospital," it said. Two rescue workers were also wounded, it added.

Mayor Vitali Klitschko said a pregnant wife and her young husband were among the dead in Kyiv.

"A husband and wife who were

expecting a child. The woman was six months pregnant," he said on social media.

In the eastern region of Sumy, emergency services said four people were killed and several more wounded in strikes that the governor said targeted energy infrastructure.

The emergency services said an electrical substation was shelled, provoking a fire that damaged an administrative building.

"Four people died and three people were rescued from the rubble," it said.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmygal said Russian strikes hit energy facilities in Sumy and the central Dnipropetrovsk

Several more wounded in strikes as EU launches training mission for Ukraine troops

region. The emergency services said Russian missile strikes on electrical facilities in the central region left one injured, but that power had since been restored.

Meanwhile, the EU on Monday stepped up its military support for Kyiv by launching a mission to train 15,000 Ukrainian soldiers and providing 500 million euros more for weapons.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister

Dmytro Kuleba addressed a meeting of his EU counterparts via video link from a shelter in Kyiv and urged them to provide more air defences and sanction Iran over drone supplies to Russia after strikes pummelled the city.

"While Dmytro Kuleba addresses (us) from a bomb shelter, we raise EU military assistance to \$3 billion and launch the EU military training mission for Ukraine," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell tweeted from the meeting in Luxembourg.

"Russia's latest indiscriminate attacks will not shake our determination to support Ukraine, it will only reinforce it."

After almost eight months of

war, Ukraine's forces are making progress on the battlefield and Kyiv's western backers are keen to make sure its troops have the capacity to keep fighting.

Several EU nations — including Germany and France — are already training Ukrainians to use the modern artillery systems, missile launchers and air defences they are delivering to Kyiv.

But the EU has lagged behind in providing large-scale training to help the country's military face off against Russia's invading forces. The United States, Canada and Britain have already been training thousands of troops.

— AFP

Conservative elected new prime minister of Sweden

COPENHAGEN: Sweden's top conservative politician, Ulf Kristersson, has been elected as the country's new prime minister after receiving the necessary support in a parliamentary vote on Monday, ending eight years of Social Democratic leadership.

The 58-year-old leader of the Moderate Party received the backing he needed from the Riksdag in Stockholm, also thanks to the votes of the far-right populist Sweden Democrats, with 176 of the 349 lawmakers voting for Kristersson and 173 against him.

Kristersson will thus succeed the Social Democrat Magdalena Andersson. He is due to make a government statement and present his Cabinet on Tuesday. The change of government will then be officially approved by King Carl XVI Gustaf.

"I'm grateful and happy about the trust I have received from the Riksdag, and also noticeably humble in view of the tasks that lie ahead of us," Kristersson said after the vote. "Sweden finds itself in several parallel crises at once," the newly elected leader said, citing electricity prices, climate challenges and global issues, among others.

To tackle these crises, his Moderates will form a minority



Ulf Kristersson, the leader of Sweden's Moderate Party and newly elected Prime Minister holds a press conference in Stockholm. — AFP

The success of Kristersson's minority government depends heavily on the Sweden Democrats, who achieved a record result in the elections and came in second after the Social Democrats

government with the Christian Democrats and the Liberals, which will work closely if unofficially with the Sweden Democrats in parliament.

The conservative/right-

wing camp led by Kristersson's Moderates and including the Sweden Democrats achieved a narrow majority of 176 of the 349 seats in parliamentary elections on September 11, while the camp of Andersson's Social Democrats narrowly missed the majority with 173 seats.

Andersson had been leading a minority government since November 2021, just like her predecessor Stefan Löfven had in the seven years before.

The success of Kristersson's minority government depends heavily on the Sweden Democrats, who achieved a record result in the elections and came in second after the Social Democrats. — dpa

Brazil's Lula retains lead over Bolsonaro ahead of runoff

SAO PAULO: Brazil's leftist presidential candidate Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is leading President Jair Bolsonaro with 48.1 per cent voter support against the incumbent's 41.8 per cent ahead of an October 30 runoff vote, according to a CNT/MDA poll published on Monday.

Considering only valid votes, which exclude null and blank ballots, Lula reached 53.5 per cent voter support against Bolsonaro's 46.5 per cent.

The survey was conducted on October 14-16 and has a margin of error of 2.2 percentage points up or down.

Several polling firms in Brazil were criticised for underestimating support for Bolsonaro in the first-round vote.

Earlier, far-right incumbent Jair Bolsonaro and leftist challenger Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva traded jabs and insults as they squared off on Sunday in their first-ever head-to-head debate, two weeks from Brazil's presidential runoff election.

Lula attacked Bolsonaro as a "little dictator" and the "king of fake news," drawing accusations of lying, corruption and a "disgraceful" record in return, as the rivals sparred in the first debate for their polarising



second-round showdown on October 30. Front-runner Lula, the charismatic but tarnished ex-president (2003-2010) who is seeking a comeback at 76, was particularly fiery criticising Bolsonaro over his handling of Covid-19, which has killed 687,000 people in Brazil, second only to the United States.

Attacking Bolsonaro over his resistance to buying vaccines and embrace of unproven medications such as hydroxychloroquine, Lula said the president "carries the weight of those deaths on his shoulders." — Reuters

Need for culturally responsive teaching



Massrat Shaikh

The writer is an educational psychologist

Most of our educators in the Middle East are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Our teachers should be prepared to teach and support students whose cultural-linguistic backgrounds are different from theirs — effectively implementing culturally responsive pedagogy is essential for our classrooms.

Culturally responsive teaching is using the students’ culture and background to enhance their learning experiences in class.

It helps us understand where our students are coming from so we can drive instruction effectively. Culturally responsive practices are at the heart of any school’s culture of respect and empathy.

When teachers use culturally relevant instruction, students have more inclusive educational experiences. When local traditions and cultures are employed in our schools, every student feels seen, welcomed, and loved.

Connecting lessons to students’ language and heritage makes them more relevant, and it helps students to connect with learning and improves their retention. Celebrating cultural diversity also teaches students to respect others.

Here are some strategies that educators can use to make learning more culturally relevant :

1. Taking time to self-reflect

Self-reflection is a critical component of being an effective teacher. It allows us to step back and look at who we are as a person and as a teacher. We may not want to admit it, but all human beings have certain stereotypes and biases that may have been shaped by our upbringing, peers, education, or personal experiences.

Lack of awareness about our biases can impact our actions, such as being unfair when grading student papers or judging students based on how they dress and how they act. Teachers are often key

SELF-REFLECTION IS A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF BEING AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER AS IT ALLOWS US TO STEP BACK AND LOOK AT WHO WE ARE AS A PERSON AND AS A TEACHER

role models for many students, and our behaviours can impact how students treat one another. When teachers ignore racist behaviours in their classes, they encourage those behaviours to continue.

2. Creating a student-centred classroom

Knowing our students is essential. Knowing their names and academic history and generally understanding students’ cultural backgrounds. Knowing students’ cultural and religious practices can help us rethink and direct our

lessons, even if it sometimes means going beyond scripted lessons to adapt them to our classrooms.

It is also important to know that valuing local culture and diversity is much deeper than the appearance of our classrooms, like bulletin boards and school events and activities, namely multicultural fairs. Culturally responsive pedagogy is deeper and focuses on student learning, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Here the attention should be on what we do and use in our lessons.

3. Rethinking our classroom libraries

Often, there is a disconnect between what is being taught in the classroom and students’ day-to-day lives. Having a classroom library that reflects students’ cultural background is a pathway to connect students’ lives to learning in the classroom. Inviting students to bring books that reflect their

traditions and share them with their peers allows students to take pride in their own cultures.

4. Engaging students’ families and community

Our efficacy as teachers also comes from engaging our students’ families and community. Family engagement is more than having families attend school meetings. When seeking resources to enhance our lessons, we can consider collaboration from the students’ families and community, such as inviting local parents and community members to talk to students about their history and culture.

Culturally responsive instruction is reciprocal. It is not just the students and schools who benefit from it; the culture and community are also elevated through the school’s programmes. It offers students an opportunity to learn their own culture and gives the student a sense of worth that they belong.

In Colombia, a seed bank unlocks genetic secrets in climate fight

ANASTASIA MOLONEY

Colombian agronomist Javier Gereda gestures proudly towards the sturdy bean plant and bright green seedlings he has spent the past seven years nurturing back from agricultural oblivion.

“This is my son and his siblings,” he said with a smile, standing beside a row of high-tech fridges at a world-renowned seed bank that is using genetics to help farmers adapt to climate change and shock-proof global food systems. “This is the only species of this bean that exists outside of its original habitat of Costa Rica, where it disappeared years ago,” Gereda said. “We’re the only source of extinct species like this.”

The seed from which Gereda grew his plants was stored in the world’s largest genetic library for beans, cassava and tropical forages, collected and preserved since the 1970s, according to the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). Set amid sugarcane fields near the southwestern Colombian city of Cali, the Future Seeds gene bank is run by CGIAR’s Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT).

Rising demand for food due to a growing population and falling crop output caused by soil degradation and hotter, more extreme weather mean researchers must breed more resilient crop varieties, experts say. Stored in rows of steel shelves lined with glass test tubes and dried in airtight packets in a huge fridge chilled at minus 20 degrees Celsius, the bank houses a collection of 67,000 samples.

“It’s an insurance for the future,” scientist Joe Tohme, a geneticist who heads the Alliance’s research on crops for nutrition and health, said. A new facility housing the collection has received about \$17.2 million in funding so far, including from the Colombian government, and an additional \$17 million donation from The Bezos Earth Fund, created by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos.

The world used to cultivate more than 6,000 different plants but about 75 per cent of crop diversity has been lost in the last century and UN experts say we now get about 40 per cent of our calories from three main crops - maize, wheat and rice. — Thomson Reuters Foundation



Katie Rogers

The writer is a White House correspondent for NYT

Democrats in tight races are asking for Biden’s help

Jill Biden’s weekend included five flights, 11 events and three appearances with Democrats who all requested her help before the midterm elections. There was also a spin class in there somewhere.

During one particularly busy 27-hour chunk of time, Biden, the first lady, appeared in Atlanta, where voting rights activist Stacey Abrams is in an uphill race against Brian Kemp, the Republican governor. Then it was on to Florida, where she toured a breast cancer research facility and gave an interview to Newsmax, a conservative network. After that, she appeared with Rep Val Demings, D-Fla, who hopes to unseat Sen Marco Rubio, R-Fla, and Charlie Crist, a centrist Democrat, trails Gov Ron DeSantis, a conservative firebrand.

“It’s not going to be easy,” Biden, on the last leg of a 15-hour day, told a group of people at a second event to support Demings on Saturday.

“But we know how to win because we’ve done it before.”

With President Joe Biden’s job approval hovering at about 40 per cent at a moment when Democrats are struggling to hold onto the House and Senate, Jill Biden, 71, has become a lifeline for candidates trying to draw attention and money but not the baggage that an appearance with her husband would bring.

According to a senior White House official, she is the most requested surrogate in the administration.

“She does not offend people in a way that a president can because she’s much less polarising and political,” said Michael LaRosa, a communications strategist and her former press secretary.

“It’s why she was sent all over rural Iowa and New Hampshire during the campaign and why she can go places now that the president can’t.”

Modern first ladies are usually relied on to humanise their husbands or translate their policies, but how much they decide to engage is almost always



Casey Desantis and her husband, Gov Ron DeSantis, accompany first lady Jill Biden and President Joe Biden during a visit to survey storm damage in Fort Myers, Fla.

JILL BIDEN HAS BECOME A LIFELINE FOR CANDIDATES TRYING TO DRAW ATTENTION AND MONEY BUT NOT THE BAGGAGE THAT AN APPEARANCE WITH HER HUSBAND WOULD BRING

up to them. Melania Trump was more popular than her husband, Donald, and was a much-requested surrogate, but she did not campaign for him during the 2018 midterms or during the 2020 campaign, often saying she was too busy parenting her son or tied up with her own engagements as first lady.

Michelle Obama was largely viewed as a secret weapon for Democrats before the 2010 midterms, when she campaigned with personal stories about her family. But she spent large stretches of time away from politics,

and her popularity was not able to counter the losses the Democrats sustained in the House and Senate that year.

There are risks involved for women who try to do too much: When Democrats lost their House majority in 1994, enough people blamed Hillary Rodham Clinton’s efforts to reinvent health care that she publicly apologized.

As first lady, Biden has traveled to 40 states, and lately, she has tucked a plethora of political visits into trips that spotlight her policy interests.

On Thursday, she taught a full day of classes at Northern Virginia Community College before flying to Fort Benning in Georgia, where she visited with military families.

Her political appearances began Friday evening, when she stood in the foyer of a home with Abrams and asked about 75 attendees, mostly women, to step closer to her.

Then she took aim at Kemp and the policies that he supports, including a law he signed that bans abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy, and another that limits voting access.

— New York Times

Celebrating achievements of women

The nation is celebrating Omani Women's Day this week, and it takes us back to 2009, when Late Sultan Qaboos declared October 17 as Omani Women's Day. This year the slogan is 'Women are Partners in Development.'

This is an affirmation to the important role women have in the renewed Renaissance led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The roles undertaken by women today vary and contribute to realise the developmental goals and ends for the nation.

The Honourable Lady, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, on this occasion, has stressed the great efforts made by Omani women and their role in developing and supporting families as well as the patriotic, social, and humanitarian contributions made by Omani women in various fields.

Years have passed by since the day was declared, and in 2022 we are looking at women working in every sphere. If there is any limitation it is only in an individual's mind.

Omani women have shown their entrepreneurial spirit at the same time have quickly moved into various professions in various fields.

Waiting for the right job might still continue to be a challenge for young graduates, but it might be the best time to gather more skills and take volunteer work and build on network.

Communication skills is one such that needs to be developed willfully as it can build or break a career. One might have the best qualifications, but may lack skills and if you have technical skills but lack communication skills there is not much to manoeuvre around.

From avoiding a person to situation a sense of isolation creeps in. The individual might never even realise it but one cannot survive on their own. Even if one is an



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

YEARS HAVE PASSED BY SINCE THE DAY WAS DECLARED, AND IN 2022 WE ARE LOOKING AT WOMEN WORKING IN EVERY SPHERE. IF THERE IS ANY LIMITATION IT IS ONLY IN AN INDIVIDUAL'S MIND

entrepreneur there is still a need to work as a team.

So what do women need in the current scenario? Do they need to prove themselves.

A friend replied, women need to be heard.

Another lady said let the women do their thing and not be judged.

But what we probably need is just clarity in the concept of what we really want in life.

IMPORTANT ASPECT

Most women comfortably manage family and career although it can be challenging. So this is a day to celebrate her achievements, while it is nice to be appreciated by others the most important aspect is to truly value oneself.

And when it comes to valuing oneself the need would be to be conscious of physical and mental health. As they say woman is the central part of a family.

This month will continue to have series of events celebrating Omani Women's Day, and it would be great for each woman to keep a record of what they achieve especially in self growth until next year October 17, 2023.

Meanwhile, at present 49.5 per cent of 729,331 students in government schools are girls and this shows that more and more girls are getting educated.

Woman is valuable no matter what her age is or what her achievements are - because every life is important, her role is important and how and who are we to judge what is truly an achievement?

She need not be a career woman, her success is also recognised when she proves to be a promoter of humanity safeguarding the society and raises future citizens who safeguard the society and nation through knowledge and values.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



An artisan paints earthen lamps ahead of the festival of lights (Diwali) at the Kumbharwada potters' colony of Dharavi slums in Mumbai, India, on Monday. – AFP

Pakistan floods leave cotton workers' dreams in tatters

WAQAR MUSTAFA

Planting cotton for the first time was shaping up as a shrewd investment for young Pakistani farmer Muhammad Awais - until the floods struck. "I used good, expensive seed, fertilisers and pesticides... The first picking made me enormously happy," said Awais, 26.

"But the floods meant the reaping was my last," he said as he walked among the shreds of his ruined crops on a small plot in Hasanabad, a village in the central cotton-growing district of Dera Ghazi Khan.

Devastating floods linked to climate change killed 1,700 people and submerged huge swathes of land in Pakistan during July and August, wrecking a third of its cotton crop and the livelihoods of millions of farmers, pickers and other workers.

Locally grown cotton is sold to the textile industry that accounts for 60 per cent of Pakistan's total export earnings, and the shortage of supplies has closed scores of mills, with hundreds of thousands of jobs feared at risk, industry sources said.

"A lot of mills are running at partial capacity or shutting down due to non-availability and shortage of quality raw material and tough economic conditions," said Kamran Arshad, a senior official with the All Pakistan Textile Manufacturers Association.

"With zero state support or social security, I'm afraid, 20-25 per cent of

DEVASTATING FLOODS LINKED TO CLIMATE CHANGE KILLED 1,700 PEOPLE AND SUBMERGED HUGE SWATHES OF LAND IN PAKISTAN DURING JULY AND AUGUST, WRECKING A THIRD OF ITS COTTON CROP AND THE LIVELIHOODS OF MILLIONS OF FARMERS, PICKERS AND OTHER WORKERS

the labour force will lose jobs," he said by phone from the eastern city of Lahore. In the textiles hub of Multan, union representative Musawwir Husain Qureshi said about 200 mills had closed. Arshad gave a similar figure for the number of shutdowns and partial operations.

"Our mill has continued despite the odds," said Qureshi, echoing the industry association's calls for urgent government aid for the sector, which is also struggling with surging energy costs amid a wider economic malaise. The government

announced discounted electricity rates for millers earlier this month, but officials have played down the risk of mass factory closures and cotton shortages - noting a series of poor harvests in recent years.

"For the last four or five years, they have been meeting the shortfall through imports," said Muhammad Ali Talpur, an economic consultant at the federal government. "They will be importing as much as they have already been doing. So no need for layoffs," he added.

In Pakistan's cotton farming

areas, growers are already counting their losses, which are also affecting a myriad of different workers in the sector. Truck drivers have nothing to transport and many ginners - who are involved in the process of removing the seeds and debris from raw cotton - are sitting idle. Like Awais, farmer Omar Daraz had hoped for a healthy yield and profit this year, especially since the price fixed by the government - 10,000 Pakistani rupees (\$46) for 40 kg of cotton - was promising. "We were dreaming of earning

well this time. But the rains and floods shattered all those dreams," Daraz, 30, said as he surveyed scattered stems of cotton plants across his land, the craters left by the floods still visible.

Before the flooding, Pakistan's cotton crop was forecast to reach 10.5 million bales, up from 8.3 million last year, and despite the losses, there is time for output to recover, said Cotton Commissioner Khalid Abdullah.

"The cotton crop not fully damaged can compensate. All buds open to flowers during September will translate into fibres," he said.

Still, the amount of cotton received by members of Pakistan Cotton Ginners' Association (PCGA) is down 24 per cent from last year, according to a report published earlier this month.

Cotton picker Khanum Mai used to work at Daraz's farm, but she and fellow day labourers said the crop losses meant they would miss out on months of earnings.

In the nearby town of Natkani, Commission agent Zahoor Ahmad, who helps farmers grade, weigh, pack and sell their harvests to buyers, told a similar story.

"I used to deal in 6,000-8,000 kg of raw cotton per day. Now I deal in 200-300 kg a day," said Ahmad as he weighed a bag of cotton brought in by a farmer.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation



Women collecting what's left from cotton fields after the floods.

sport

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Podium return for Ahmad, Oman Racing

PORTIMAO, PORTUGAL: Oman Racing’s Ahmad al Harthy made a very welcome, and richly deserved, return to the European Le Mans Series LMGTE podium during the final race of the 2022 season at Portimao in Portugal on Sunday, with a tremendous second place result in the No 69 Aston Martin Vantage.

Partnered as usual by British driver Sam De Haan and Danish racer Marco Sorensen, the trio delivered a series of excellent performances with Al Harthy’s double stint at the beginning of the race particularly impressive.

Starting the four-hour race at the Autodromo Internacional do Algarve on a wet track, the Omani stormed from fourth on the LMGTE grid to take the class lead and kept the squad squarely in the fight for victory, and certainly a podium, throughout almost two hours of exceptional driving.

In the end, the trio secured a very competitive runner-up result — their second podium of the campaign — which also elevated them into a final championship finish of fifth in the LMGTE driver

standings and fifth in the team standings for the Oman Racing with TF Sport entry.

“Finally, what a way to end the season!”, said an elated Al Harthy, “I’m absolutely delighted to finish on the podium in Portimao and fly the flag for Oman, it’s the first time I’ve raced at the track and is a very nice way to finish the season off. We did the best we could, I had a start which was extremely tricky with track conditions which were very tough to race on, but I did my best.

“I handed the car over to my team-mates in a good position, they both did a great job, and it really was a challenging race with changing weather conditions. The only car which beat us was one which went with a completely different strategy, an interesting one which paid off for them. It’s always amazing to finish on the podium and always amazing to see the Omani flag flying on the podium.”

He added: “I’m so thankful to my incredible partners, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sohar International Bank,

Ahmad al Harthy, Sam De Haan and Marco Sorensen seal P2 result

Fifth place secured in both driver and team standings

FINAL EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES LMGTE DRIVER STANDINGS

5. Ahmad Al Harthy/Marco Sorensen/Sam De Haan, 59 pts

FINAL EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES LMGTE TEAM STANDINGS

5. Oman Racing with TF Sport, 59 pts

OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS, for their amazing support. We went into a new championship this year and performed extremely well, we’re proud of what we have achieved and also proud of our development as well.”

So tricky were the conditions at the start of Sunday’s race, several cars had spins on the two formation laps. At the rolling start, from fourth in LMGTE, Al Harthy made a great launch and starred on the first lap to climb into third, then second, before grabbing the class lead.

Showcasing his prowess on a track with low grip, the Omani having always been renowned as something of a wet-weather specialist even though coming from a country where the climate is anything but, he quickly opened a healthy advantage of 1.5 seconds.

By lap four he was inside the overall top 15 ahead of all but two of the LMP3 class prototype cars, and several of the headline LMP2 prototypes, but on lap six the No 32 Ferrari 488 moved into the LMGTE lead. Over the next few laps the fight for the lead

intensified, with the No 83 Ferrari closing in and making it a three-way battle with the trio running nose-to-tail.

Although slipping to third, Al Harthy almost immediately hit back to reclaim second — with out of position LMP2 cars also causing challenges — before a Full Course Yellow period on lap 16. The Omani pitted a lap later, with around 35 minutes elapsed, and rejoined the race in second position.

The No 83 Ferrari stayed on track and elected not to pit, so Al Harthy stayed second until the rival car served its first stop 70 minutes into the race. Retaking the lead, the Oman Racing driver was around 12 seconds clear of the No 32 Ferrari before another FCY almost 90 minutes into the contest.

Following the resumption Al Harthy extended his advantage, opening a lead of more than half a minute, and he eventually pitted with less than 10 minutes remaining in hour two for his second stop – handing the Aston Martin over to De Haan.

When the order settled De Haan

held third in LMGTE behind the sister Oman Racing car, but he was also under pressure from the No 32 Ferrari and slipped to fourth just a couple of laps later prior to another FCY period. Using the cautionary period as an opportunity to serve the extra stop the team needed to make, De Haan pitted and rejoined still in fourth place.

He made the team’s next stop with just over 70 minutes of racing to go, handing over to Sorensen for the run the flag. Holding third place prior to another FCY, one more variable was thrown into the mix when rain started to fall. The Dane took the chance to make a stop with around one hour of racing to go and at the re-start he held third behind the sister Aston Martin.

With 40 minutes to run, the second Oman Racing car headed for the pits and Sorensen duly moved up into second. Staying well clear of the pursuing Ferrari 488 for the remainder of the race, Sorensen brought the car home in the runner-up spot to well deserved cheers from the Oman Racing crew.

Oman beach soccer team back to action in internal camp

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 17

Oman beach soccer team is back to action after a gap of more than five months from their last presence at the West Asian Football Federation (WAFF) Beach Soccer Championship in Jazan city, Saudi Arabia.

The team, coached under the watchful eyes of experienced national coach Talib Hilal, began a domestic preparatory camp on Monday and will run until October 27. The ten days internal gathering is part of the team’s preparation for the forthcoming assignment including their participation at the International friendly tournament in Saudi Arabia in November which yet to be confirmed.

Also, the national team is gearing up for the 2023 AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup in Thailand in next March. The Asian event will act as a qualifier for the upcoming edition of Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup and the hosts will be decided in next month in Dubai.

Coach Talib Hilal opted 14 players for the upcoming camp in Muscat

including: Khalid al Oraimi, Munthir al Oraimi, Mishaal al Oraimi, Abdullah al Souti, Amjad al Hamadani, Said al Farsi, Sami al Balushi, Younis al Owaisi, Yahya al Muriki, Abdulrahman al Fazari, Sameer al Saadi, Nooh al Battashi, Talal al Awadi and Ahmed al Owaisi.

Oman beach soccer team had ended their campaign at the West Asian Football Federation (WAFF) Beach Soccer Championship in the runners up position after they defeated narrowly 3-2 by UAE in the final match. During the event, Oman team had started their opening match in Group A with a 4-2 win against eventual champions UAE. Oman thumped Kuwait 3-1 in the second game before going down 4-3 to Lebanon in the last group match. In semifinal, Oman defeated Palestine 6-3 to move into the final match.

Coach Talib Hilal’s men will return back to another warm up gathering by end of this month during October 30 to 7 November in Muscat. The forthcoming camp will feature friendly matches to raise up the technical readiness of the players.





A picture shows a view of the Host Country Media Centre for Qatar's FIFA football World Cup, with a mural of its mascot "La'eeb", in the capital Doha. — AFP

Qatar World Cup ticket sales near 3m, says Infantino

DOHA: Ticket sales for the soccer World Cup are approaching the three-million mark ahead of the tournament kicking off in Qatar on November 20, Fifa's president Gianni Infantino and event organisers said on Monday.

The top three purchasing countries of the 2.89 million tickets sold are Qatar, the United States and Saudi Arabia, World Cup Chief Operating Officer Colin Smith told a news conference in Doha.

Infantino, addressing the conference in a recorded video, said 240,000 hospitality packages had been sold for the month-long tournament, the first to be held in a Middle Eastern country.

Qatar, the smallest country to have hosted soccer's global showpiece tournament, is preparing to receive an estimated 1.2 million visitors during the World Cup.

Thousands of fans are expected to stay in neighbouring countries like tourism hub the United Arab Emirates and fly in to Doha for matches due to limited accommodation in Qatar.

The director general of Qatar's World Cup organising committee, Yasir al Jamal, told the news conference that 2 million room nights have been sold and that Qatar has added an additional 30,000 rooms to accommodate last-minute ticket sales.

Many hotel rooms in Doha will be occupied by soccer teams, their support staff and World Cup officials. Japan will be the first team to arrive for the tournament on November 7, Smith said. — Reuters

QATAR TO HOST 2023 ASIAN CUP

KUALA LUMPUR: World Cup hosts Qatar will stage the 2023 Asian Cup, the Asian Football Confederation said on Monday, after China withdrew earlier this year because of Covid.

China pulled out in May because of its 'zero-Covid' policy, leaving the AFC scrambling to find a new host for its flagship men's 24-team football tournament.

The tournament had been due to be held in 10 Chinese cities from June 16 to July 16 next year.

The AFC did not say in its statement when the Asian Cup would now take place, but secretary-general Windsor John said it will likely be in January 2024 because of the cooler weather in Qatar at that time of year.

South Korea and Indonesia were the other two countries in the running after China's withdrawal, but Qatar got the nod — to the obvious displeasure of the Korea Football Association.

The AFC also said its executive committee had shortlisted India and Saudi Arabia for the 2027 Asian Cup.

"The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) executive committee has today confirmed the Qatar Football Association as the host association for the AFC Asian Cup 2023," the Malaysia-based AFC said in a statement.

AFC president Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim al Khalifa said Qatar is ready to put on the event despite the short lead time to prepare. It will also host the World Cup starting next month.

The AFC chief hailed Qatar's "existing world-class infrastructure and unrivalled hosting capabilities".



A general view shows banners bearing the pictures of Brazil's Neymar (C) and Cameroon's midfielder Ga Ondoua in the Qatari capital Doha ahead of this year's Fifa World Cup. Qatar said that more than 1.5 million people have applied for the compulsory pass for the football World Cup, that begins on November 20. — AFP



Qataris pose next to an illustration of the Qatar 2022 Fifa World Cup mascot 'La'eeb' at the Hayya service centre in the capital Doha. — AFP

"Qatar's capabilities and track record in hosting major international sporting events and their meticulous attention to detail are well admired throughout the globe," he said.

South Korea jointly held the men's 2002 World Cup with Japan, but has not staged the Asian Cup since 1960. The Korean FA made clear its disappointment at missing out and took a swipe at



AFC President Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, Fifa President Gianni Infantino and QFA President Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani pose during an announcement ceremony of 2023 Asian Cup at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

the selection process.

"It has not been held in Korea, an Asian football powerhouse for 63 years, and in terms of rotation and regional balance, it was a reasonable order to hold it in East

Asia," the KFA said.

"Unexpectedly, however, we had to face tough competition as Qatar jumped into the bid with its abundant financial, human and material base." — AFP

PDO's Sarah takes top honours at women's bowling event

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, OCT 17

Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth represented by the Women's Sports Department and in cooperation with the Oman Bowling Committee is organising the 14th edition of Women's Bowling Championship, team category competitions, from October 11 to 19, at the Al Noor Bowling Centre.

The tournament is being competed by nine teams from various government and private sector firms namely, Royal Court Affairs (RCA), Petroleum Development Oman, Muscat Municipality, Oman Electricity Transmission Company,



Mohammed Al Barwani Holding Company, Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company, Worli Engineering Company, OQ Company and Omran Company, while the tournament will conclude on Wednesday with the teachers category competitions.

As many as 32 players representing nine teams ended



the singles category competitions with great results, where each player competed in four matches.

Sarah from PDO won first place in the individual category competition with a score of 648 points from four matches. Aziza from Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC)

came in second with 581 points. Tamader from the Worli Engineering Company snatched the third place with 532 points. OETC's Zahra claimed fourth spot with a total of 493 points while fifth place was claimed by Fathia from Muscat Municipality with 479 points.

RCA's Majida was sixth with 466 points, MB Holding's Saada was seventh with 456 points, Fatima from Worli Eng came eighth with 455 points, Shamsa from MB Holding was ninth with 449 points and Worli Eng's Mona finished 10th with 435 points.

In the doubles category competitions, the Oman Electricity Transmission Company won the first place through Aziza al Buraiki and Zahra al Rawahi. The Petroleum Development Oman claimed second place with Sarah al Maskari and Heba al Nabeeh, while Worli Engineering Company finished third with Tamader al Balushi and Fatima al Zadjali.

300 karatekas take part as national karate concludes

MUSCAT: The 14th Sultanate of Oman Karate Championship was wrapped up, which was held in the main hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher in Muscat under the auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, and in the presence of Gotayama Moto, Ambassador of Japan to Oman, and Salem bin Hamad al Mahrouqi, Chairman of the Omani Karate Committee, member of the Majlis Ash'shura as representative of Adam. Also present were some heads and representatives of government and private units, trainers, referees and members of the organising committee.

The competitions were held on October 14 and 15 in which more than 300 male and female karatekas participated, representing 36 karate clubs, academies and centres spread throughout the governorates of Sultanate of Oman.

The karatekas were divided into weights and age groups of 12-13 years old, 14-15 years old, 16-17 years old and under-21 categories with specific weights in kata and kumite.

At the end of the second day, the closing ceremony was opened with a speech by the chairman of the Omani Karate Committee, in which he welcomed the Minister of Economy, the patron of the



ceremony, their Excellencies and all the attendees. The Karate

Pioneers Academy performed a karate presentation by coach

Ahmed al Zakwani. Then Ali Al Raisi Club displayed a kata skills

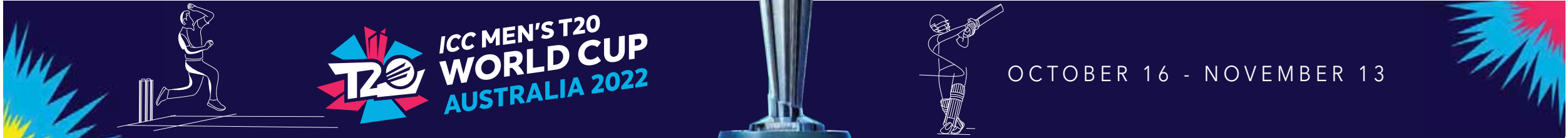
presentation.

Later, the two final kata matches were held, moderated by a selection of international and national referees.

During the concluding ceremony, Dr Said al Saqri gave away the medals for the top three karatekas.

In the overall standings, Ali Al Raisi Karate Club came in first place and the Champions Karate Club took second spot while JKA and Shotokan Karate Centre finished third.

The Oman Karate Committee holds these tournaments annually to develop the game with the support of various clubs, centres and private academies.



Raza leads Zimbabwe to win over Ireland

HOBART: Sikandar Raza smashed 82 off 48 balls to set up a convincing 31-run victory for Zimbabwe in their opening match of the Twenty20 World Cup against Ireland on Monday.

Zimbabwe lost three early wickets after being invited to bat first in Hobart, but Raza put on key partnerships to guide the team to 174-7 in Hobart.

Returning paceman Blessing Muzarabani took three wickets as Zimbabwe restricted Ireland to 143-9.

“We are ecstatic. To put up a performance like that first game, it shows that we do belong here,” said skipper Craig Ervine, whose side missed the last edition in the UAE.

“It’s a pity that it has been a long way since we have played a World Cup.”

Zimbabwe are on track to make the Super 12 after winning the first of their three matches in round one.

Raza set the tone for the team’s domination after he put on attacking stands with Sean Williams and then Milton Shumba.

Ireland pace spearhead Josh Little got Regis Chakabva for nought with the second ball of the match and then dismissed Wesley Madhevere for 22.

Raza took nine balls to get going as he smashed Curtis Campher for two sixes in the ninth over and kept up the attack despite losing partners along the way.

He fell on the last ball of the innings off Mark Adair after hitting five fours and five sixes.

Ireland were never in the chase after losing their top four for just 22 runs inside four overs with pace bowler Richard Ngarava and Muzarabani sharing the spoils.

Campher, who made 27, and George Dockrell attempted to revive the chase in their stand of 42.

But Raza broke through with his off spin, dismissing Dockrell for 24.

Campher departed soon after and the Irish batting fizzled, despite cameos by Gareth Delany (24) and Barry McCarthy (22 not out).

Tendai Chatara finished with two wickets, missing out on a hat-trick. — AFP

SCOTLAND STUN TWO-TIME CHAMPIONS WEST INDIES



AUSTRALIA: George Munsey’s unbeaten half-century and some inspired bowling helped Scotland thrash two-time Twenty20 World Cup champions West Indies by 42 runs in another big upset on Monday.

The shock result comes a day after Namibia hammered Asia Cup winners Sri Lanka in the tournament opener in Australia.

Munsey’s 53-ball 66 laced with nine boundaries steered Scotland to 160-5 after being put in to bat first in the opening-round match in Hobart.

Left-arm spinner Mark Watt led the bowling charge to bundle out West Indies, winners of the title in 2012 and 2016, for 118 in 18.3 overs.

Minnows Scotland are on course for a second straight Super 12 place after achieving the feat last year.

“Obviously it is a special win for us. Took a lot of work and has given us belief,” said Scotland skipper Richie Berrington.

“We haven’t had as many T20 cricket as we would have liked but have played a lot of 50-overs cricket. It was about transferring those skills to the short form.”

Munsey, a left-handed batsman, and Michael Jones got Scotland off to a flier as they raced to 52 in 5.3 overs when rain interrupted play.

Munsey hit a string of boundaries including three straight fours off Alzarri Joseph, whose first over at a T20 World Cup cost 15 runs.

The 45-minute rain break seemed to hit the batting momentum as Jason Holder bowled Jones for 20 soon after play resumed and then sent back Matthew Cross for three in his next over.

Munsey, named man of the match, stood firm and attempted to rebuild with Berrington, who got a good start but fell on 16 off Joseph.

Munsey, playing his 54th T20 World Cup fifty after a cameo by Calum MacLeod, who smashed 23 off 14.

Munsey finished with a flourish as he hit three fours in a 15-run 20th over from Odean Smith.

TOUGH LOSS

West Indies now have no margin for further error if they are to progress to the Super 12 stage.

“Tough loss for us, obviously disappointed,” said skipper Nicholas Pooran.

“We have to work hard and win two games. We have to take accountability and responsibility.” Kyle Mayers started

aggressively in the West Indies reply with three boundaries, but mistimed a hit to be caught out by Munsey off pace bowler Josh Davey. He made 20.

Evin Lewis and Brandon King hit back with a flurry of boundaries in their attempt to get quick runs in the first six overs of powerplay — when only two fielders are allowed outside the inner circle.

But their stay was short-lived as left-handed Lewis fell for 14 and King was bowled by Watt, who returned figures of 3-12 from his four overs, for 17.

The two-time champions slipped further at 62-4 when off-spinner Michael Leask bowled Pooran for five. Scotland’s bowlers kept chipping away as the rest of the West Indies batting caved in, despite a valiant 38 by Holder, who was last man out. — AFP

Shami stars as India edge Australia in warm-up match



MELBOURNE: Australia captain Aaron Finch gave himself a timely boost ahead of the Twenty20 World Cup while India seamer Mohammed Shami proved his worth in a dramatic four-wicket final over in a warm-up match between the tournament heavyweights on Monday.

Finch had managed only one fifty in his previous 10 T20 Internationals and his slump has been a major talking point in the lead-up to Australia’s title defence on home soil.

His 76 off 54 balls will ease some of the pressure on the under-fire opener, though it was not enough to secure victory as a spectacular late collapse gave India a six-run win.

“It’s nice to get a few in the middle,” Finch said afterwards at the Gabba.

“It would have been nice to get us over the line but can’t win the World Cup in a practice game.”

Shami, replacing the injured Jasprit Bumrah in the India squad, was summoned to bowl his only over with Australia needing 11 runs from the last six balls with four wickets in hand.

The seamer conceded two runs with each of his first two deliveries before wreaking havoc as Australia lost four wickets in four balls, including a run out.

“He’s coming back after a long time, so we wanted to give him an over,” Rohit said of letting Shami bowl the final over.

“We know how lethal he can be with the new ball, but we just wanted to give him a little bit of challenge coming and bowling that death over and you saw what he did.”

With Australia preferring to chase, India made a competitive 186-7 with half-centuries from opener KL Rahul (57) and number four Suryakumar Yadav (50).

Rohit Sharma’s 14-ball 15 would do little to ease concerns about the India captain’s form heading into the tournament, while Virat Kohli (19) did not last long either.

ENGLAND BEAT PAKISTAN

England beat Pakistan by six wickets in another practice match with Ben Stokes smashing 36 before Harry Brook (45) and Sam Curran (33) chipping in with unbeaten cameos to complete the chase.

Skipper Jos Buttler was particularly happy with the return of Liam Livingstone (ankle)

and Chris Jordan (finger) from injuries.

“It’s great to see Liam Livingstone back on the field after a significant injury, and get four overs from Chris Jordan as well,” Buttler said.

“We tried a few different things that guys were wanting to experiment with and this is the perfect time to try and do that.”

Last year’s finalists New Zealand were bundled out for 98 runs in 17.1 overs by South Africa, who chased down the meagre target with 8.4 overs to spare.

Wayne Parnell struck twice in the powerplay before the South African spin duo of Keshav Maharaj (3-17) and Tabrazi Shamsi (2-6) ran through New Zealand’s batting line-up.

— Reuters



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Pact signed for infra development of new Mahas Industrial City



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 17

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) and Galfar Engineering and Contracting signed on Monday, October 17, an agreement for the construction of roads and infrastructure at Mahas Industrial City in the Wilayat of Musandam Governorate.

The signing ceremony was held under the patronage of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam, and in the presence of Hamad bin Hamoud al Qasabi, Acting CEO of Madayn.

The RO 5 millin project, which will be developed on an area of one million

sq metres at a total cost of approximately RO 5 million, incorporates an internal road network of 7 km, installation of 100 lighting poles, construction of a 75-metre bridge linking the entrance of the industrial city to the main road, and water and sewage networks of 5 km and 4.5 km respectively.

Moreover, the project includes electricity and telecom services and networks, water tank with a capacity of 1,000 cubic metres, sewage collection tank, rainwater drainage channels with a width of 20 metres and a total length of 4 km, in addition to other works that shall enhance the infrastructure services and facilitate traffic movement at Mahas Industrial City.

Soft opening of ‘Invest in Oman’ pavilion before year-end

NEW FOCUS: Oman-UK forum aims to promote Oman as global investment destination

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 17

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in cooperation with the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Muscat, hosted the Oman-British Investment Forum on Monday, October 17, 2022 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, in the presence of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Sir Alan Duncan, Board Member of the Anglo-Omani Society (AOS), and Bill Murray, Ambassador of the United Kingdom in the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to a number of business leaders from the two countries.

The forum aims to promote the Sultanate of Oman as a global destination with potential for investment in a number of promising sectors, as well as to showcase investment opportunities in Oman.

In opening remarks, Al Yousef indicated that the ministry seeks to attract quality investments to the Sultanate of Oman, stressing that the economic stimulus plan is based on five main axes, namely, incentives related to taxes and fees, incentives that improve the business environment and



investment, incentives to support small and medium enterprises, and incentives for the market.

These measures are aimed at supporting economic recovery efforts, enhancing the performance of economic activities and attracting foreign investments, he said.

The UK is currently the largest investment partner of the Sultanate of Oman, said Al Yousef, not that the partnership has expanded in recent years to include several sectors, most notably oil and gas, technology,

infrastructure, defence and education.

He indicated that the National Programme for Investment Promotion and Export Development (Nazdehar) is working on analysing the investment environment for local and foreign capital, the challenges it faces, and the appropriate mechanisms to improve them, taking into account advanced international experiences.

To this end, an ‘Invest in Oman’ pavilion has been developed, with a soft opening planned before the end of this year, the minister said.

The custom-designed facility will serve as the first port of call for any investor who comes to the Sultanate of Oman, acquainting with the investment environment prevalent in the country, incentives, and the industrial cities, as well as free zones and special economic zones distributed across Oman.

Each investor will also be assigned an account manager

who will guide the investor from the time of their arrival through the completion of all registration process. Significantly, as many as 14 government agencies whose approvals are required for any investment will be housed in the hall.

Al Yousef added that the ministry seeks to work in integration with its partners to develop a business environment that supports the knowledge economy, enhances trade, industry and investment, and protects competition through stimulating policies and legislation, and integrated services with the smart government system to achieve sustainable development in the Sultanate of Oman.

Headed that the main objective of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion is to facilitate the business environment, improve the services provided, support the national industry and Omani products, and enhance exports.

Opec+ decision on output cut to help stabilise markets: Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MoEM), supports the decision of Opec+ to cut oil production as agreed this month. The statement was made on the official Twitter account of MoEM which says, “The decisions of Opec+ are based on purely economic considerations and on the realities of supply and demand in the market and respond to them proactively, in a practical and objective manner.”

The tweet added, “The recent decision of Opec+ to cut production is in line with its previous decisions in terms of being based on market data and its variables, which was important and necessary to

reassure the market and support its stability and that the working mechanisms of the Opec+ group require that its decisions be taken by consensus and unanimity of all member states.”

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia’s King Salman bin Abdulaziz said the kingdom was working hard to support stability and balance in oil markets, including by establishing and maintaining the agreement of the Opec+ alliance.

The kingdom’s defence minister and King Salman’s son, Prince Khalid bin Salman, also said the October 5 decision to reduce output by 2 million barrels per day — taken despite oil markets being tight — was unanimous and based on economic factors.

His comments were backed by ministers of several Opec+



member states including the United Arab Emirates. The UAE’s energy minister Suhail al Mazrouei wrote on Twitter: “I would like to clarify that the latest Opec+ decision, which was

unanimously approved, was a pure technical decision, with NO political intentions whatsoever.”

His comment followed a statement from Iraq’s state oil marketer SOMO. “There is

complete consensus among Opec+ countries that the best approach in dealing with the oil market conditions during the current period of uncertainty and lack of clarity is a pre-emptive approach that supports market stability and provides the guidance needed for the future,” SOMO said in a statement.

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation Chief Executive Officer Nawaf Saud al Sabah also welcomed the decision by Opec+ — which includes other major producers, notably Russia — and said the country was keen to maintain a balanced oil markets, state news agency KUNA reported.

Bahrain’s oil minister said on Sunday that the Opec+ decision was taken unanimously and after a thorough technical study

of the global market conditions and developments, state news agency (BNA) reported. Member states are keen to take decisions that aim to stabilise oil markets, and the group will study any economic developments to ensure the stability of global markets and supplies, and the balance between the interests of producers and consumers, the minister added.

Algeria’s energy minister called the decision ‘historic’ and he and Opec Secretary General Haitham al Ghais, visiting Algeria, expressed their full confidence in it, Algeria’s Ennahar TV reported. Ghais later told a news conference that the organisation targeted a balance between supply and demand rather than a specific price.

(With inputs from Reuters)

BankDhofar holds wholesale banking partners’ meet

MUSCAT: Demonstrating its efforts in building on the existing relationships with its partners and strengthening its ties with stakeholders, BankDhofar recently organised Wholesale Banking Partners’ Meet Event. The event was attended by Abdulhakeem bin Omar al Ojaili, CEO of BankDhofar, and BankDhofar’s Corporate Banking management team, who welcomed the representatives of the corporates and the stakeholders.

In his welcome speech at the event, Abdulhakeem bin Omar al Ojaili, CEO of BankDhofar, stressed that BankDhofar spared no effort in providing best-in-class services and products to its ever-growing portfolio of customers on both the corporate and retail front.

“We strongly believe that our



success as a bank goes hand-in-hand with the success of our valued customers, be it individuals, SMEs, or large Corporates, as your success is a vital element contributing to the growth and prosperity of the nation. Therefore, we exert our time, effort, and resources into supporting our valued customers,”

he added.

In addition to the corporate customers, the event was attended by Khatija Haque, Chief Economist and Head of Research at a leading regional bank, who delivered a presentation on the Global & Regional Economic Outlook.

Elaborating on BankDhofar’s Wholesale Banking services, Mallikarjuna Korisepati – Chief Wholesale Banking Officer, noted: “At BankDhofar, we endeavour to build our corporate and loan syndications portfolios with a clear and cautious approach focusing on quality, extending best-in-class customer service, and with the least turnaround time. This client-focused approach, along with the launch of several new banking initiatives, products, and services, consolidate BankDhofar’s position as a leader in the market.

We recently announced the launch of the Escrow Account Service, which supports the government’s efforts to regulate the real estate sector. In addition to these initiatives, we provide tailor-made financial solutions through our various touchpoints, such as our dedicated Corporate Centres in Muscat and Salalah and soon in Sohar.”

BankDhofar is one of the best banks in Oman, with a strong presence in Corporate Banking, Project Finance, Treasury, and Retail Banking. The Bank caters to customers’ needs and sets the standards for the best customer experience within the banking industry in the Sultanate of Oman through innovative products and creative solutions.

NU’s VC holds 1st meeting with Student Advisory Council



MUSCAT: Dr Ali bin Saud al Bimani, Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Science and Technology, held the 1st meeting with the Student Advisory Council on Thursday, in its fourth session at the university level for the academic year 2022-2023.

The meeting was attended by Dr Salim bin Khamis al Araimi, DVC, Dr Talal bin Mohammed al Balushi, Head of the External Relations and Strategic Alliances Office, Lamiaa bint Salem bin Ghanim al Rawas, Deputy Director of Student Affairs and Head of the Elections Committee, and members of the Student Advisory Council, which consists of 16 students from the university’s 4 colleges, as well as representatives from the School of Foundation Studies.

Dr Ali al Bimani welcomed the members of the Council and emphasised their effective and important key role in developing the work and upgrading the level of students’ scientific, cultural, social, sports, artistic and other aspects of constructive activities, in addition to consolidating the values of volunteerism in a way that supports voluntary charitable projects and works and community service.

The NU’s VC also urged the Council’s students to make more efforts and effectiveness in the activities of the Student Council, as they represent all the students at the University.

During the meeting, Wahaj al Houti, Head of the Student Advisory Council, expressed the readiness of the members of the Student Advisory Council to provide all aspects of support to their fellow students, represent them well, and play the role assigned to them to the fullest.

NBO hosts Tatmeen forum to raise awareness on caring for orphans

MUSCAT: Committed to empowering communities, National Bank of Oman (NBO) recently hosted the first-of-its-kind orphan care forum in Oman, ‘Tatmeen’, held at its headquarters in Azaiba. Organised in collaboration with Oyoon and under the auspices of Sayyidah Maani bint Abdullah bin Hamed al Busaidiyah, Director General of the Family Growth Department at the Ministry of Social Development, the event included the participation of charities across Oman concerned with the care of orphans.

Presenting various research papers, they discussed the challenges they face and their recommendations for providing improved services to this important social segment.

Through its active CSR programme, NBO continues to fulfil its commitment to giving back to the community. Its activities, which are carried out throughout the year, include a range of educational and youth-led programmes, donations, and sponsorships, all aimed at contributing to the betterment of society and particularly, those in need.

The bank was also awarded by the Ministry of Social Development for its continuous contribution supporting people with disabilities in Oman.



Bank Nizwa marks Omani Women’s Day with a leadership session

MUSCAT: From leadership lessons to success stories, Bank Nizwa marked Omani Women’s Day with a day-long eclectic and interactive workshop for its female employees Led by Dr Lamya al Haj, a member of the board of directors of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington and an associate professor at Sultan Qaboos University and founder of Coach4Change. The workshop involved attendees in immersive learning activities and demonstrated life skills to redefine success and cultivate leadership qualities that enhance both personal and professional life. Organised to celebrate Omani women and their achievements, the get-together provided a platform for the Bank’s employees to engage with the management team, partake in team building activities and assimilate life skills through an inspiring workshop that was aimed at empowering women and enhancing their roles in the society. The day-long session began with a formal introduction of the facilitator to



the gathering of Bank’s women employees, followed by a warm welcome from Khaled al Kayed, CEO, Bank Nizwa, who applauded the role of every member of the audience in shaping the fortunes of the Bank. He also congratulated Omani women on the glorious day designated to recognise their combined efforts in the progress of the society and the nation at large.

Haifa bint Abdul Ali al Lawatiyah, Assistant General Manager of Human Resources at Bank Nizwa, commented: “This day is an important day as it sheds light on Omani women, who are an integral part of the development in various areas including socially, economically and many others. This day also embodies the importance that our government is giving to the role of the Omani women in contributing towards the national development.”

Haifa added: “At Bank Nizwa, we embody this direction, where women constitute 31 per cent, and we commend the effective role played by female employees in advancing the development of both Bank Nizwa and Islamic banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman. And this inspiring workshop comes in order to develop professional and personal skills of our female staff, which aims to enhance their capability in both professional and personal life”.

Buy a Kia Seltos & get a chance to win a fully paid trip to watch Fifa World Cup Qatar

MUSCAT: Kia customers planning to own a Kia Seltos can now also look forward to getting a chance to win a fully paid trip to watch Fifa World Cup event in Qatar. On buying any Kia vehicle during the promotion period, Kia customers can get a chance to Scratch & Win more than 100 match tickets where they can witness teams like Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Japan and more, live in action. Apart from Fifa Qatar match tickets, customers will also get comprehensive service up to 50,000 kms and 1 year insurance. The campaign will end on November 4, 2022. (Conditions apply. Please visit Kia showroom for details.)

Kia’s exciting and compact Seltos SUV makes an impressive mark with its stylish profile and thrilling driving dynamics. The Seltos’ exterior design details, such as its long hood, a strong, character



line on the front bumper, and sharp lines pressed into the bodywork, make it instantly recognisable.

Along with full LED headlights and taillights the Seltos has LED daytime running lights and rear lamps and 3D multi-layer indicators. For driving in foggy conditions, the Seltos is also equipped with LED fog lights. The Seltos has an impressive interior that contributes to making every journey fun. The cabin is characterised by broad, sweeping shapes and highly technical details and is equipped with a range of technologies to maximise convenience, connectivity and ease of use.

Offering fantastic driving experiences in the Seltos is a 1.6-litre gasoline engine producing 121 HP paired to a six-speed automatic transmission (6AT).

The Seltos is also equipped with a Drive Mode Select system that lets drivers adapt the car to their preferred style or the road conditions. Drivers can choose from ‘Normal’, ‘Eco’ and ‘Sport’ mode.

The Eco mode is tuned to maximise vehicle range by using fuel-saving measures, while Sport mode increases responses from the steering and electric motor to maximise the dynamic driving feel of the car. Normal mode provides a careful balance between the two.

The Seltos is a technologically advanced and refined compact SUV equipped with a range of advanced features. They include a smart key with button start, auto cruise control, terrain mode system (snow, mud, sand) & electronic stability programme.

The Seltos is fitted with dual airbags, as well as a suite of electronic vehicle safety systems.

These include Kia’s vehicle stability management system as standard, incorporating traction control and electronic stability programme. It also includes anti-lock braking system, a traction control system as well as front and rear parking sensors, for assistance when parking.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way.

No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the ‘Good Partnership award’, ‘Family Like Care’ Service award’, and ‘Kia ‘Distributor of Distinction’ award.



Be'ah launches new programme aimed at utilising 4IR technologies



MUSCAT: Be'ah company has launched a programme code-named "Be'ah-Tech", which seeks to encourage university students to maximise innovation and hone their expertise in utilising technology and techniques of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) to help develop the waste management sector, improve life quality and build a sustainable national economy in Oman.

The programme seeks to enhance cooperation among the public sector, the private sector and the academic sector. In particular, it aspires to engage colleges and universities and enable them to provide new specialisations in the fields of environment, engineering, technology and innovative solutions worthy of addressing the challenges in the waste management sector.

The programme is designed to empower youth to use artificial intelligence and 4IR techniques in

The programme seeks to encourage university students to maximise innovation and hone their expertise in utilising technology and techniques of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) to help develop the waste management sector

serving the environment, promoting the approach of "green waste", studying and classifying types of waste.

The three-month programme will bring together teams of students from different universities and colleges (public and private). The students will attend training workshops administered by experts and specialists. — ONA

1m sq metre site earmarked for RO 40m Food City in Khazaen

FOOD SECURITY: Anchored by Khazaen Fruit & Vegetable Central Market, new Food City project to serve as national integrated hub for food industries

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 17

An ambitious Food City initiative, currently under development within Khazaen Economic City at Barka in South Al Batinah Governorate, is set to be the largest of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman to date.

Covering an area of over 1 million square metres, the Food City – first unveiled earlier this year – will be anchored by the Khazaen Central Fruit and Vegetable Market.

It will also host a food industries zone earmarked for food packaging and distribution related activities, and a food processing cluster for value-adding investments. Total investments in the Food City are projected at over RO 40 million.

In a tweet on Sunday highlighting the significance of the project, Khazaen said: "The Food City is a national integrated



project in the food sector that strives to develop a structure for food industries in the Sultanate of Oman and achieve the objectives of the national food security strategy."

It added that the initiative — the first of its kind in Oman — will support the export, import, distribution and marketing of fruits and vegetables, among other food products, besides enhancing

supply and cold chains.

Driving much of the investment in the new Food City will be the Khazaen Fruit and Vegetable Central Market SAOC, which was set up to develop Oman's new centralised fruits and vegetables depot upon the eventual shuttering of the current wholesale and warehousing market at Al Mawaleh in Muscat Governorate.

A consortium of public and

private sector shareholders, comprising Oman Infrastructure Fund (Rakiza), Salim & Partners LLC, Al Kalbani Group and Khazaen Development and Investment Company, has been set up to fund, develop and manage the new market in Khazaen.

Significantly, the availability of massive quantities of fresh fruits and vegetables is expected to spawn investments in a wide array of food processing, warehousing and logistics, cold chain infrastructure, transportation and handling, lab testing and recycling activities at the Food City.

Officials also envisage the potential for investments in customised reception centres for arriving trucks, air-conditioned wholesale markets, auction floors, onion and potato sorting sheds, forklift operation units, truck parking services and related services. The Omani government, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Oman Investment Authority, the Oman Food Investment Holding Company (Nitaj), and Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), among other agencies, is making a concerted effort to enhance the country's overall food security.

Oil steady as fears counter positive Chinese signals

LONDON: Oil prices were steady on Monday as China's continuation of loose monetary policy was offset by fears that high inflation and energy costs could drag the global economy into recession.

Brent crude futures rose 21 cents, or 0.2%, to \$92.48 a barrel by 11:10 GMT, recovering from a 6.4% fall last week. US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$86.34 a barrel, up 6 cents, or 0.1%, after a 7.6% decline last week.

Vandana Hari, energy analyst



Pump jacks operate at sunset in Midland, Texas. — Reuters

at Vanda Insights, said a 3-4% slump at Friday's settlement was encouraging some bargain-hunting on Monday, but

momentum looked weak amid thin trading volumes.

China's central bank rolled over maturing medium-term policy loans on Monday while keeping the interest rate unchanged for a second month, in a signal that the central bank would continue to maintain loose monetary policy.

Beijing would also greatly increase domestic energy supply capacity and step up risk controls in key commodities including coal, oil and gas, and electricity, a senior

National Energy Administration official said on Monday.

China will further increase reserve capacities for key commodities, another state official told a news conference in Beijing.

China is expected to release trade and economic data this week, with third-quarter GDP growth possibly set to rebound from the previous quarter, but 2022 threatening to be China's worst performing year in almost half a century. — Reuters

Commodities look to China Congress for direction



OLE S HANSEN

The commodity sector, led by crude oil and fuel products, continued to show strength despite ongoing concerns that central banks' battles against inflation through aggressively hiking rates will tip the global economy into a deeper slowdown than already seen.

Not least in Europe, where the "hybrid war" with Russia has driven gas and power prices sharply higher. This is while there are raised concerns ahead of the February 2023 implementation of an embargo on fuel supplies from Russia.

While US inflation is expected to start slowing soon, thereby

providing some relief to global economies hurt by a strong dollar, the market will have to wait at least another month – after the September print came in higher than expected.

With US consumers remain in good shape and are still spending, the global economy will continue to be challenged by the US FOMC hiking into strength while others are being forced to hike into weakness – supporting the strength of the dollar. This will be the case until we reach peak hawkishness from where US yields – we focus on two-year notes, currently at a 15-year high – and the dollar begin to recede.

Russia's war in Ukraine and the actions taken by the West to counter Putin's behaviour remain a key source of support for several commodities, including wheat, aluminium and diesel, thereby offsetting the potential risk of a slowdown in demand. In addition, the contentious decision by Opec+ – led by Saudi Arabia and Russia – to cut production, despite the risks of such action further damaging the global growth outlook, has supported a strong recovery in



crude oil.

Meanwhile, the industrial metal sector remains stuck near an 18-month low as Chinese lockdowns have hurt demand. However, during the past couple of weeks, the market has become more balanced. Lower visible stock levels in China indicated a pick-up in demand, while the risk of sanctions against Russia's industrial metal industry could see supply for aluminium and other metals drop.

The Chinese Communist Party meets on October 16 at its twice-

a-decade National Congress. The decisions being taken will be watched closely by commodity traders considering the importance of China as the world's biggest consumer of raw materials. Apart from the general risk to global growth, another source of price weakness remains China. This is where the government's firm belief in its zero-Covid policy has reduced growth and consumption, while an ongoing property crisis has also clouded the economic outlook.

The focus will be on General

Secretary Xi Jinping's speech on October 16 when he presents the Work Report of the 19th Central Committee. The market is looking to the leadership and the report for a route that will steer the nation out of its current economic slump.

However, any hopes that China might loosen its zero-Covid measures received a setback this past week when the People's Daily newspaper defended the strategy three days in a row.

Nevertheless, the market will be looking for additional economic support and stimulus, primarily towards infrastructure and energy transition projects, all of which are supportive for the industrial metal sector.

Multiple uncertainties, as seen through the continued level of volatility and falling liquidity, will continue to impact most commodities ahead of the year end.

While the recession drums will continue to bang ever louder, the sector is unlikely to suffer a major setback before picking up speed again during 2023.

Our forecast for stable or potentially even higher prices

led by pockets of strength in key commodities across all three sectors of energy, metals and agriculture will be driven by sanctions, upstream cost inflation, adverse weather, low investment appetite and continued tightness across many key commodities from diesel and gasoline to grains and industrial metals.

Crude oil traded softer on the week in response to renewed demand concerns, but still higher on the month after Opec+'s decision to cut their baseline production by 2 million barrels per day from November.

The decision was heavily criticised by consuming nations for being premature and ill-timed and it triggered an unusually strong rebuke from the International Energy Agency who, in their monthly oil market report, said the cut would increase energy security risks worldwide, thereby leading to higher prices and volatility, and potentially ending up being the tipping point for a global economy already on the brink of recession.

(The writer is Head of Commodity Strategy – Saxo Bank)

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Announcement of Capital Reduction

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Women at the forefront of Oman's art scene

Male and female artists in Oman are treated equally in terms of opportunities and support albeit the history of Omani women in art is fairly recent, their work conveys their singular experience and perspective within a continuously evolving culture... **P20**

K-pop stars BTS to serve military duty

K-POP BOY BAND BTS will go off on mandatory military service, starting shortly with oldest member Jin, their agency said on Monday. Jin, 29, has put off his service for as long as he can and faces the imminent prospect of a full stint — meaning nearly two years out of the public eye — when he turns 30 in December. Since their 2013 debut, BTS have become a worldwide sensation with their upbeat hits and social

campaigns aimed at empowering youth. "Jin will cancel the request to delay enlistment in late October 2022 and follow the Military Manpower Administration's relevant procedures for enlistment," the seven-member band's management group HYBE said in a regulatory filing. All other members will also serve the mandatory military duty according to their respective plans,

it added. "Both the company and the members of BTS are looking forward to reconvening as a group again around 2025 following their service commitment," HYBE-owned BigHit Music, which manages BTS, said in a separate statement. All able-bodied men in South Korea aged between 18 and 28 must serve in the military for between 18 and 21 months as part of efforts to defend against nuclear-armed North Korea. Some categories, however, have won exemptions, or served shorter terms, including Olympics and Asian Games medal winners and classical musicians and dancers who win top prizes at certain competitions. Some lawmakers had called for BTS to be exempted. BTS announced a break in June from group musical activities to pursue solo projects, raising questions about the band's future. They reunited to perform a free concert on Saturday in the city of Busan in support of South Korea's bid to host the World Expo 2030 in the port city. — **Reuters**

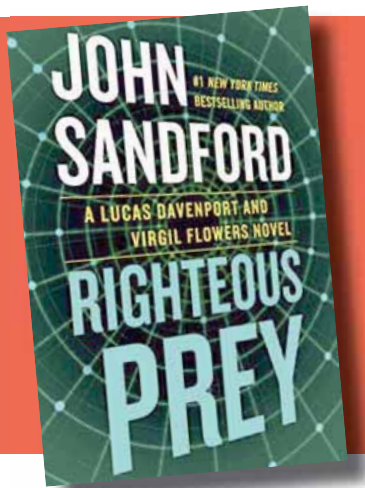


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RIGHTEOUS PREY

BY JOHN SANDFORD

The 32nd book in the Prey series. Virgil Flowers and Lucas Davenport go after a group of vigilante killers.



TRAVEL TALES

Ancient windmills are seen at the village of Consuegra, Castilla La Mancha region, central Spain. The windmills are famous since the 17th century, when Don Quixote, the famous novel of Cervantes, was first published and introduced the scene of Don Quixote fighting with the windmills. — **AFP**



BLUE DIAMONDS

A collection of blue diamonds valued at more than \$70 million are displayed at Sotheby's in New York City on October 12, 2022. The diamonds will be sold across Sotheby's jewellery auctions this year and throughout the Spring of 2023. — **AFP**





Film festival gives Gazans a rare taste of the movies

FILM BUFFS IN the Gaza Strip, who for decades have been deprived of going to the movies due to the destruction of cinemas during bouts of unrest in the enclave, are enjoying a rare chance to see a slate of films on the big screen.

Cinema once flourished in Gaza, with audiences flocking to see Arab, Western and Asian films, but the movie houses were torched in the First Intifadha in 1987 and then burned down again in 1996 during another wave of internal violence.

Since then, Gazans have had to rely on television and online streaming services and the chance to see films on the big screen offered a rare treat for people living under a border blockade imposed by neighbouring Israel and Egypt.

The Red Carpet Human Rights Film Festival, which opened on Thursday, is showing around 40 films at a recently renovated culture centre, around half dealing with the decades-long conflict with Israel and the rest dealing with human rights issues around the world.



While Gazans have been able to go to movie screenings which are held from time to time at theatres and other venues, such a full bill of films is a rare treat.

The festival's executive manager, Montaser Al-Sabe, said he was proud of the festival in Gaza but that he hoped cinemas would open up again.

"We have cinemas in Gaza that are closed, open them," he said.

Around 300 films from 60 coun-

tries were submitted before organisers made their selection, which included films by four young local film-makers who had the rare opportunity to show their work to local audiences.

All the films had to be reviewed ahead of screening by local authorities in Gaza, which has been controlled by the militant Hamas group since 2007.

Among the films on show was "Eleven Days in May", co-directed by Gaza director Mohammed Sawwaf

and British director Michael Winterbottom, which tells the story of 66 children killed in the 11-day war between Israel and Gaza militants in May 2021.

"We focused on their beautiful memories, their jokes and their dreams," Sawwaf said. "Cinema is a civilised and important means to get the voice of children and the people of Gaza to the world."

He said the movie was narrated by Hollywood actress, Kate Winslet, who

starred in the world-famous movie *Titanic*, and music by Max Richter.

But for some, the festival will be all about the simple pleasure of going to the cinema and watching a movie with loved ones.

"Outside Gaza, I had stood in line and bought a ticket. I hope I go through the same experience here in Gaza Strip and that I can take my little family and watch a movie at a cinema together," said Amira Hamdan, who was there with her husband. — Reuters

ENTERTAINMENT

'Knives Out' sequel stars laud Angela Lansbury at Europe premiere



DANIEL CRAIG and co-stars of "Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery" lauded Angela Lansbury on Sunday as the whodunit sequel in which the late actress makes a cameo closed the London Film Festival.

Craig said 96-year-old Lansbury — who died on Tuesday, after becoming a household name through playing a writer-detective in "Murder, She Wrote" — had been "in my life all my life".

"I mean, my favourite film was 'Bedknobs and Broomsticks'," said the James Bond franchise legend, referring to the 1971 Disney hit film that Lansbury had starred in.

"The fact that she's in our movie, we're so blessed -- and also what an incredible life she had," Craig, 54, told reporters at a press conference alongside other "Glass Onion" film-makers ahead of its European premiere.

Director Rian Johnson said Lansbury's appearance in his follow-up to 2019 murder mystery "Knives Out", alongside one by the late Broadway icon Stephen Sondheim who died last November, followed brief filming visits he made to their homes.

"Besides just the honour of having them in the movie... just being able to have 10 minutes with each of them, to tell them what their work has meant to me was really, really special," he added.

'SUBVERTING THE GENRE'

"Glass Onion", which features a star-studded ensemble cast that also includes Edward Norton, Kate Hudson and Janelle Monae, will hit cinemas for just a week next month before streaming on Netflix from late December.

Following the success of the first film — which netted more than \$300 million at the global box office, despite a budget of just \$40 million — Craig will also return as Southern gentleman sleuth Benoit Blanc for a third time.

Johnson — who previously directed the divisive blockbuster "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" — reiterated that his budding new franchise stems from his love for prolific British crime writer Agatha Christie.

He said his contemporary take on the whodunit, which in this installment include Norton as a vainglorious tech billionaire and Hudson as a vacuous fashionista, tries to emulate her "subversive" approach a century ago.

"She was putting twists on it that if you did them today, people would say 'that's very subversive, you're subverting the genre'," said the American director, who has laced his efforts with considerable satire and humour.

"If Agatha Christie were writing right now, she'd have tech billionaires and she'd have these characters."

"She wasn't writing period pieces, she was writing exactly to her time and all of the things that we think of as murder mystery tropes were people in society."

'DOUBLES THE LAUGHS'

Norton appeared to need little persuading to take on the fictional role of online app founder Miles Bron, with most of the movie taking place on his ludicrously lavish private Greek island as he hosts wealthy friends.

"What's not to love about roasting the tech illuminati?" the award-winning actor and film-maker said with a smile, noting there was "abundant feedstock" for his character in contemporary life.

"When you can see the times you're living in and you can see the foibles — not just the puffed up characters that we see in the world around us, but even ourselves — it doubles the laugh, it doubles the pleasure," Norton added.

"That's why it was so wonderful that Rian (Johnson) found some new targets. It's also fun."

The film-makers in London for the screening — which follows a world premiere in Toronto last month — were at pains not to reveal any giveaway spoilers about the twisting plot.

But one minor storyline Johnson and Craig did confirm is that their already-beloved main character, private detective Blanc, is gay — with Hugh Grant making the most fleeting of appearances as his partner.

"Yes, he obviously is (gay)," Johnson said when asked, jokingly adding of Grant: "there's nobody in the world I can imagine bringing more joy for Benoit Blanc".

Now in its 66th year, the 12-day London Film Festival opened on October 5 with a new musical screen adaptation of Roald Dahl's classic "Matilda". It also premiered Netflix's animated version of the classic "Pinocchio", directed by Oscar winner Guillermo del Toro, on Saturday. — AFP



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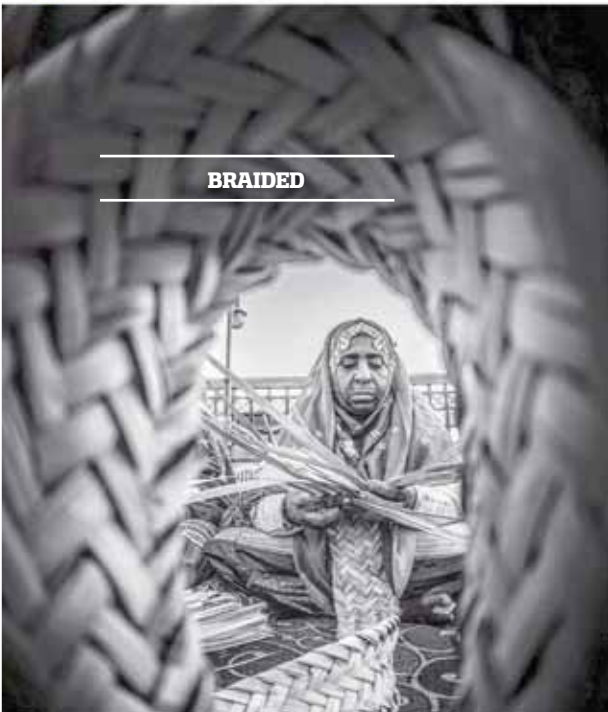
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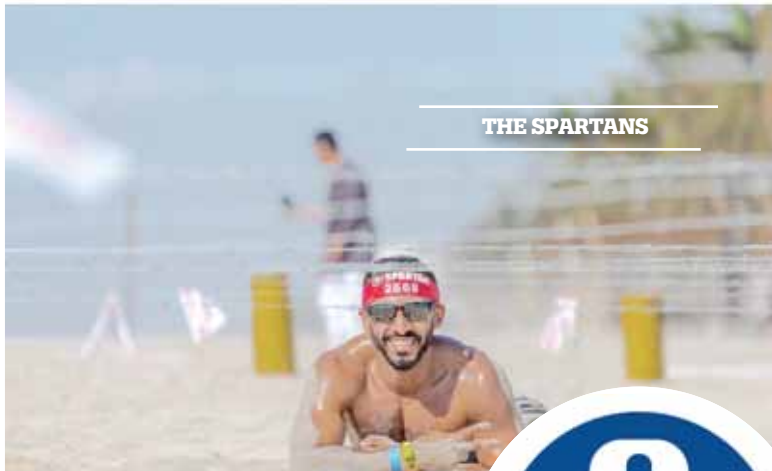
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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

Egypt temporarily bans hugely popular 'mahraganat' singers



EGYPT'S STATE-AFFILIATED musicians' union on Sunday announced a temporary ban on electro-beat "mahraganat" singers, the cultural establishment's latest move to crack down on the hugely popular genre.

Mahraganat, often known as "electro-shaabi", or popular electro, relies heavily on computer-generated and synthesised beats, and has a wide reach.

Some purists in socially conservative Egypt — a cultural powerhouse in the Arab world — view its blunt lyrics tackling topics including love, power and money as overstepping moral boundaries.

The union has "decided to temporarily suspend permits issued to mahraganat singers, in order to fully study their case (and) in order to preserve Egypt's artistic value", it said in a statement on Sunday.

The suspension came as Egyptian singer Mustafa Kamel became the union's chief.

His predecessor, Hani Shaker, had led a campaign against what he called an "unacceptable" genre, issuing a decision in February 2020 to ban mahraganat performers from clubs, cafes, hotels and concert venues.

"This kind of music which is loaded with sexual innuendo and offensive language is completely unacceptable. That's why we have pulled the plug on it once and for all," Shaker said at the time.

The measure was unevenly enforced.

Union spokesman Tarek Mortada said on Sunday that a committee would be formed in coming days to study the issue and determine a course of action, which could include a permanent ban.

The move, he said, is to "preserve public taste in the country."

Mahraganat music has gone mainstream in Egypt, with its outlandishly named stars monetising social media success after the country's 2011 uprising.

With its roots in impoverished urban neighbourhoods, it has often sparked the ire of critics as "low-brow". — **AFP**

DINING

From Eiffel Tower, Michelin-starred chef showcases climate-friendly cuisine



A FANCY RESTAURANT on the first floor of the Eiffel Tower may not be the obvious setting for environmental activism, but Michelin-starred chef Thierry Marx wants to make it a showcase for climate-friendly cuisine.

Offering seasonal and local ingredients, cooked with minimal use of energy, his "Madame Brasserie" restaurant gives diners a spectacular view over Paris and an inkling of how the restaurant industry can dress a greener table.

Putting the finishing touches on a starter of leeks as his team gets ready for the evening service, Marx said his menu is designed to minimise the restaurant's carbon footprint.

"These leeks, in season now, were grown less than 50 km from here. We cook them in their own juices and we dress them with shoots of herbs grown in an organic garden within the Paris ring-road and delivered by bicycle," he said.

"It is simple, has a limited carbon impact, it is easy to eat and economical — we do our job with minimal environmental impact," he added.

Marx — who won his first Michelin star in 1998, runs several restaurants and is a national celebrity due to his participation in TV cooking

shows — said that from its opening in June, the entire restaurant had been designed to save water and energy.

warming up the entire kitchen.

"We are in the middle of an energy crisis and an environmental crisis, we cannot



Twenty years ago, a restaurant such as this would have been blazing hot ahead of the evening service, with all the hobs and ovens on, he said.

Now, his crew cooks on induction cookers with copper casseroles, which only heat the pan itself without

assume that this does not concern us because we run a restaurant. Awareness of all this has at times come a little late in this profession, but today there are a very few restaurant or hotel owners who don't want to make this transition," he said.

— **Reuters**

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



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Our Ammunition on Eighteen Donkeys

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

In 1996, I met in Salalah my friend Salim Kalbani, who introduced me to a number of my tribesmen whose grandparents had settled there. Amongst them were Ali bin Said al Kalbani, his son Said (to be later the Deputy Director of PDO) and his kin. Through him I also came to be acquainted with Shaikh Majid bin Mosabih al Mamri, the then wali of Taqa and in charge of civil soldiers from the Mamri tribe (with whom Salim was working).

In mid-October, we received orders to go on patrol. In three platoons, we moved from our camp, Om al Ghwarif, to Hamrer, led by the commander of our company, Maj. Revend, assisted by the British Capt. Tem Landen. Distributed into two groups, one in front and the other at the rear, separated by vehicles, accompanied by eighteen donkeys, we set off from Hamrer. With our ammunition and artillery on the donkeys, we headed towards Thamret, and then southwards, where we camped, while the vehicles returned to Salalah. We started our patrols in mountains and valleys, on the look-out for the enemy. It was an uphill task due to the rugged mountainous terrain, and all we had for food was just biscuits, sardine and, of course, tea.

Our ration was deliv-

ered to us by the "Beaver" aircraft. We used to call it "Om al Bazar", for it, as a non-military carrier with the capacity of no more than four passengers, brought us food and water. The latter it would bring in oil jerry cans, and would, as a result, taste of petrol when we drank it. "Beaver" didn't land, but rather dropped the rations and water to us.

The water we received was usually insufficient, however. One day we went out, all loaded with arms, looking for water. With the rank of corporal, I commanded two groups, following cautiously a local mountain guide. We found water, rather small in amount and smeared with cows' waste, in the head of Wadi Resham. When we reached the hill the two groups took turns in drinking. One would guard the top, and the other would go down to drink. To clean the water a little we would put our turbans (mosar) above the water and drink what filtered through it. To be sure, we drank just the amount that would enable us to survive, not to die of thirst. Indeed, the water was so scant that we couldn't collect it; no wonder we returned empty handed.

For the second time I felt exhausted as we returned to the mountain's summit. To climb down and to climb back up again was a rather exhaustive process. My exhaustion was due perhaps to salt shortage in my body. As precautions we carried both malaria and salt tablets as well as some first aid. After taking some tablets, I slightly recovered, by the grace of God.

art & life

Local Scene

TUESDAY | OCTOBER 18 | 2022



Women at the forefront of Oman's art scene

By Samuel Kutty

From the rugged landscape to the dunes or from the architecture to the environment, women in Oman are leading the way as they pour their creativity onto the canvas.

Women participating in the fine arts movement in the Sultanate of Oman gained momentum in the mid-1970s and the numbers increased manifold in the 1980s, and in the 1990s, a number of prodigies appeared and became role models for the fine art movement in Oman.

While the size of women's contribution became larger, the situation of Omani women has been thoroughly transformed during the last five decades.

Women are at the forefront of Oman's contemporary art scene, according to a report featuring Omani women artists in its latest edition of Middle East Monitor. "They are contributing massively to the art movement in Oman and around the world", the report claims.

Male and female artists in Oman are treated equally in terms of opportunities and support albeit the history of Omani women in art is fairly recent, their work

conveys their singular experience and perspective within a continuously evolving culture.

Their artworks are also truly innovative in terms of the use of new technologies and their aesthetics; they're aligned with the latest trends in contemporary art, yet steeped in historical research.

Scholar and artist Fakhriya al Yahyai from Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat wrote in the *International Journal of Arts Theory and History* that Omani women have not been too far behind in the fine arts movement that first began in the country in the mid-1970s.

"Women's participation in fine arts was marginal and limited only to Muscat. However, during the 1980s and 1990s, a number of prodigies appeared and became role models for the fine art movement in Oman", she writes in her scholarly journal "The History of Omani Women in the Fine Arts Movement".

After setting up the basic requirements of the education system, fine arts education gained special attention from the rationalised government, represented by the construction of a lot of schools, institutes, colleges and clubs in which the youth find a good climate to develop

their talents.

"The greatness of Omani cultural heritage can be found in the heritage of the sea, environments, the Omani habits and traditions, the Omani traditional crafts, and Omani architecture, including old houses, castles and forts", mentions Fakhriya.

The experience of the Omani fine artists can be described as positive and full of achievements so much so that many Omani fine artists have successfully competed for prestigious awards inside and outside the country.

The constant endeavours and hard work of some artists helped in identifying the real prodigies who have a strong influence in the Omani fine arts movement.

The list of famous female artists includes Rabha Mahmoud, Nadra Mahmoud, Maryam al Zadjali, Zakia al Barwani, Fakhriya al Yahyai, Budoor al Riyami, Mona al Baiti, Hafiza al Tamimi, Nadia bint Juma al Balushiyyah and Iftikhar al Badawiyah.

The interaction between Omani artists and foreign artists who live in Oman was one of the most important factors in activating the Omani fine arts movement and ensuring the continuity of Omani artists in joint art exhibitions at national and



international levels

Foreign participation by Omani artists in international art events ensures them the opportunity to see the art experiences of others, and this was reflected in the quality of Omani artists' productions as well as in the art movement in general.

The latest catalyst in this regard was this year's Venice Biennale, the biggest event in the art world. The debut Oman pavilion — which included three women out of its five artists — brought together the work of three generations of Omani artists, spanning five decades of modern and contemporary visual art in the country.

"It's the first time that Oman has a pavilion in Venice, so it's something very special, and we are proud to have three women," pavilion curator Aisha Stoby was quoted by Al Monitor.

Stoby specialises in modern and contemporary art from the West Asian region. "Many of the works in the Oman pavilion were inspired by specific elements in the country, which was not part of the original concept, but was a very welcome happenstance."

The pavilion also had Muscat-based Budoor al Riyami, a pupil of Anwar Sonya and a contemporary of Hassan Meer — both pioneering Omani artists present at the Venice pavilion — whose current practice focuses on photography and video installation.

Al Riyami started working with painting and sculpture, then transitioned to photography and video installation. She came to the forefront of the local art scene in 2008, winning the Grand Prize at the 13th Asian Art Biennale with a video installation entitled "The Peak of Burning". This was one of the first artworks from the Middle East employing the latest technologies, making her a leader in encouraging new forms of art in Oman and the Gulf.

In another part of the pavilion was the "Speed of Art", an installation created between 2017 and 2022 featuring the work of leading curator and artist Raya al Rawahi, who passed away in 2017. The video screen is like an airplane window, and its content refers to the relationship between art and technology.

A look at fine art history was also what characterises the work of young artist Eman Ali, one of the most controversial creatives from the region, due to her unfiltered and empowered representation of women, as well as underlying political themes.

Her latest project, Succession, is a book that was created by collecting visual archives from the 1970s.

The work of Radhika Khimji in the Oman Pavilion was also very striking. An installation called "Under, Inner, Under" includes seven fabrics with detailed paintings, a wooden sculpture, two wooden paintings, and structures attached like tiles.